

**IMPLEMENTING 15 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR HIGH  
QUALITY: A STATE AND LOCAL POLICY SCAN**

**July 29, 2016**



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This report was supported with funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

In this report we explore the extent to which states (and several large cities) are positioned to provide high quality preschool education on a large scale. States and cities that are already doing so or that could do so with modest improvements offer opportunities for advocacy to advance access to high quality early education as well as for rigorous research on the outcomes of these programs. Research in such states and cities also could help to identify with more specificity the policies and conditions associated with strong educational outcomes for children. The framework for our assessment of state capacity consists of “15 essential elements” of high-quality pre-K identified by Jim Minervino based on a research review and case studies.<sup>1</sup> Minervino concluded that all of these elements must be present to a considerable extent for high quality pre-K to be implemented at scale. From this perspective, each element should not be expected to contribute independently to pre-K effectiveness. We agree. However, we believe that our assessments of the extent to which each element is present in each state will be useful to those concerned with pre-K whether or not they fully agree with this perspective. We assessed 43 states, D.C. and three other large cities with established pre-kindergarten programs.

## Background: Public Programs and a Focus on Quality

In the past 15 years, public spending on preschool programs for children ages 3 and 4 has increased substantially, particularly funding by state and local government. From 2000 to 2013, enrollment in Head Start at ages 3-5 grew modestly, despite population growth.<sup>2</sup> Head Start enrollment at ages 3 and 4 remains around 10 percent of the population.<sup>3</sup> Over the same period of time, enrollment in state funded pre-K more than doubled, with the greatest growth in enrollment at age 4. From 2002 to 2014, state pre-K enrollment rose from 14 percent to 29 percent of the population at age four and from 3 percent to 4 percent at age three.<sup>4</sup> At a minimum, roughly 40 percent of 4-year-olds and 12 percent of 3-year olds now attend public programs. As some school districts and municipalities serve additional children not counted in state and federal programs total public enrollment is somewhat higher.

Remarkably, despite the growth in public spending and enrollment, the percentage of children enrolled in a preschool at ages three and four has changed little since 2000, according to the Current Population Survey (CPS).<sup>5</sup> Just less than 70 percent of 4-year-olds and a bit more than 40 percent of 3-year-olds attend some kind of preschool program regularly. Although Head Start and most state preschool programs target children in poverty, access to preschool education remains remarkably unequal even at age four where the most public support is available as can be seen in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Preschool enrollment (public and private) at age 4 by socioeconomic status (SES).<sup>6</sup>

<b>Lowest Quintile</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quintile</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quintile</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Quintile</b>	<b>Top Quintile</b>
50%	59%	68%	77%	83%

One implication of these numbers is that serious inequality in access has persisted in the face of the expansion of public programs in recent years even though most public programs target lower-income families. This means that there is still a large job to be done with respect to increasing access, especially for the most disadvantaged children.

The quality of these programs also remains a concern. The evidence is strong that only high quality preschool programs produce large and lasting gains in child development including academic success.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the extent to which quality has increased is unclear. Too many public programs appear to raise quality only modestly, and the quality of public programs is highly variable.<sup>8</sup>

The evidence on the quantity and quality of programs raises serious questions about public investments in preschool education, including state-funded pre-K. If a major goal is to enhance children’s learning and development in ways that increase later success in school and life, particularly for children from lower-income families, then substantial change is required.<sup>9</sup> For preschool to have the desired impacts, public policy will have to better achieve two goals. The first is to provide more widespread and equitable access. The second is to ensure that this access is to high-quality programs. Our report seeks to identify the states and localities currently best positioned to attain these two goals and for each state the barriers and opportunities to attain those goals.

## Methodology

Our process began by selecting states and a few cities for review. We excluded seven states that do not fund a state preschool program. We selected a few major cities that have implemented large-scale public programs that seek to provide high-quality preschool independent of their state’s programs for some time, San Antonio, Denver, and San Francisco.<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive review of all cities is not feasible given the number of cities, and we concluded that it would be too difficult to arrive at judgments about cities that have only recently developed programs. We excluded two major cities that have just begun major expansions--New York and Seattle--as these programs are too new to assess. In total we included 43 states, the District of Columbia, and three cities (listed in Table 2).

The review evaluated the extent to which each state- or city-funded preschool program satisfied 15 “essential elements” found to characterize high-quality public preschool programs. In this executive summary, we list all 15 elements and the criteria we used to evaluate state implementation of each element as well as summarizing our findings. For each of the elements we made a judgment as to whether the criteria were fully met, partially met, or not met. Some elements were easily judged based on simple, clear

evidence that was readily available--for example, whether at least two adults must be present in a classroom. Others required difficult inferences based on complex evidence with considerable unknowns. In a few instances, we found that we could not determine with any confidence whether the criteria were met. Our summary of results necessarily presents less information and is less nuanced than the report's full narrative.

The full report describes the basis for our findings in individual reports for each state and city. These more detailed descriptions offer additional insights into the extent to which each element is present in a state or a city and, by inference, what may be necessary for that to change. For many states with multiple programs supporting public pre-K, each program was rated separately on a subset of the 15 essential elements within the state's report: teacher requirements; class size and ration; hours/dosage; two adults in the room; special education and dual language support; child assessment; data driven decision making; and professional development.

For each state (or program within a state) the report presents an overview of the state, a table listing our conclusions regarding each element, and the evidence that was the basis for our judgment on each element. The 15 elements are organized into three sections. The first is the "enabling environment" which includes two elements that were among the most difficult to assess: political will and the capacity of preschool's administering agency to provide vision and strong leadership. The second is "rigorous, articulated early learning policies," and it has eight elements, most of which were relatively straightforward to judge. The third is "strong program practices" and contains 5 elements. This last group of elements was the most difficult to assess, as they are rated based on actual implementation, and this requires information that is not always available. Each of the 15 essential elements is listed below.

### **Enabling environment**

1. Political will including support from political leadership and, more rarely, judicial mandates
2. A compelling vision and strong leadership from early learning leaders

### **Rigorous, articulated, early learning policies**

3. Well-educated (BA & ECE expertise) and well-compensated teachers (K-12 pay parity)
4. Adult-child ratio of at least 1:11
5. At least a full school day is provided to ensure adequate dosage
6. Two (or more) adult teaching staff in each classroom
7. Appropriate early learning standards for preschoolers
8. Effective curriculum that has systemic support
9. Strong supports for education of special needs children in inclusive settings
10. Strong supports for dual language learners

### **Strong Program Practices**

11. High quality teaching
12. Child assessments that are appropriate and used to inform instruction

13. Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation
14. Professional development (PD) to improve individual teacher performance
15. Integrated systems of standards, curriculum, assessment, PD, and evaluation

To evaluate the extent to which each state (or city)<sup>10</sup> program had each of the 15 essential elements we reviewed public documents including, but not limited to, official information posted on the websites of state and local government. In addition, we interviewed key informants in each state. In many of the states, leaders in state agencies provided extensive assistance and clarification of our interpretations. Ultimately, the authors alone are responsible for all judgments in this report.

Readers are advised to keep in mind that our assessments refer to a particular point in time. Circumstances and policies change. Periodically we will update the report, but change in the enabling environment or policies can occur quickly, for better or worse. Practices tend to change more slowly, but ultimately are influenced by the enabling environment and policy.

### Criteria for Rating the 15 Essential Elements

Below for each of the essential elements we provide a brief description of the element and how it was assessed, followed by key criteria used to categorize each element as Fully Met (FM), Partially Met (PM), or Not Met (NM). For a more complete description of each element and the rationale behind it readers are referred to the originating study referenced with a link in the first endnote to this paper.

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Political leadership and, more rarely, judicial mandates can provide the necessary political will to create, scale up, sustain, and adequately fund high-quality early education. To the extent possible, judgments are based on actions of the Governor and legislature not just their statements. Increases in funding, quality standards and enrollment, and legislation passed are the strongest indicators. Other strong sources of political will include ballot initiatives and court orders. Also important, but carrying less weight, are the actions and statements of business, philanthropy and advocates.

FM: Recent history of substantial increases in funding for expanding quality programs and strong initiatives by the governor (mayor) or legislature (city council). A ballot initiative or court order that is implemented as intended also would meet the criteria.

PM: Some of the elements above, but not all, possibly because there is strong opposition or there are other problems. Some evidence of willingness to fund and to legislate high quality.

NM: No progress or decline in funding or enrollment with very inadequate support for quality. Governor and/or legislature strongly opposed.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Senior early learning leaders, particularly those in the state agency administering the program, articulate a strong vision and exert effective leadership to make that vision a reality. Components include a well-designed early learning system with high expectations and the ability to communicate and successfully advocate for this with internal and external audiences. In addition to qualitatively meeting these criteria, the size of the office of early learning staff and any regional and district level support was taken into consideration. Additional supports for leadership could come from outside the agency, for example, from higher education.

FM: Highly competent and active state office of early learning (or similar agency) that has articulated a vision of quality through regulation, guidance, technical assistance, materials, and other support, including from Higher Education. The office is housed in, or attached to, state education and/or health and human services departments or there is a strong early leaning cross-department agency.

PM: Either the number of staff is far too limited to provide adequate direction and support to the system, or the ability of state administrators to lead is limited, perhaps by agency policy, authority of ECE specialist (i.e. hierarchy in the system), or politics.

NM: There is a weak early childhood office that is unable to lead. Limited and fragmented authority would be one reason this could occur. Some may have only one or two staff.

### **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** All lead teachers have at least a BA degree plus suitable credentials in early learning, and are paid at same level as K-12 teachers.

FM: All or nearly all teachers have BA with early childhood teacher license is required for teachers and the same compensation (or at least salary) as K-12 teachers. Both must apply.

PM: Both hold in some sector (e.g., public schools only or one of several state programs).

NM: Teachers are not required to have a BA or are not paid on par with K-12 in any sector.

**Adult-child ratios.** All classrooms have a maximum of 11 children per teaching staff person. This is not just required by policy, but is also maintained in practice. We report each specific policy, and acknowledge that small upward departures might make no discernible difference. However, reducing the number of children per staff substantially below 11 might improve impacts significantly.

FM: A ratio of at least 1:11 applied to all programs, and no more than 22 in a classroom.

PM: A ratio of 1:11 or better in one sector but not another.

NM: A ratio of 1:11 not required of any program, even if some classrooms may meet the criterion.

**Learning time.** All children served are offered a full school day. We report policy regarding the required schedule including both hours per day and days per year.

FM: Meets the definition of a full school day in that state (or is within a half-hour). Some states count only “instructional” time and others count hours children are on the premises, so hours may not be strictly comparable across states or cities.

PM: One sector (e.g., public schools or a major city) fully met the criterion, but another did not.

NM: Minimum number of hours is less than a full school day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** All classrooms are required to have at least two teaching staff, typically a lead teacher and an assistant.

FM: Required of all programs, but an exception is allowed if policies permit one adult when a classroom contains 11 or fewer children and this is not commonplace.

PM: Two adults are required in the classroom in some sectors, but not others.

NM: One adult is allowed for classes of more than 11 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The state has comprehensive learning standards that are age and developmentally appropriate and the state strongly supports (e.g., materials, guidance, and professional development) their influence on practice.

FM: Comprehensive standards that are well articulated and mandated or strongly supported with an emphasis on appropriate practice.

PM: Some sector fully meets the criterion of age-appropriate learning standards.

NM: No comprehensive standards or they are clearly inappropriate and not evidence based.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state guides and supports the adoption and use of research-based curriculum aligned with the early learning standards, connected to a system of professional development, and implemented with high fidelity.

FM: The state mandates one or a choice of several evidence-based models. The state strongly promotes and supports the use of evidence-based curriculum through guidance, training, and professional development. Approval processes and requirements for written documentation carry weight.

PM: The state does much of what is required for FM, but not all.



NM: The state offers a multitude of choices including curricula that are proven ineffective or leaves the selection of curricula entirely to local discretion without strong guidance and support.

**Support for students with special needs.** Programs provide strong supports for children with special needs including an emphasis on inclusion. Preschool special education is integrated into the continuous improvement process and other key components of the early learning system.

FM: Strong programs as demonstrated by regulations and guidance, support staff at the state and other levels, and an emphasis on inclusion. Preschool special education participates in a statewide continuous improvement or accountability system. One office administers both preschool special education and regular preschool.

PM: Has some of the above for FM, but not all.

NM: Limited guidance and support for programs that support children with special needs.

**Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL).** Programs have a well-developed strategy for educating young DLL children that recognizes their unique needs and the importance of home language and culture. The state strongly supports the implementation of this strategy with guidance, materials, and professional development. Ideally, bilingual teachers lead classrooms where there is dominant language other than English. Bilingual paraprofessionals also may be part of strong system of supports.

FM: Strong programs as evidenced by regulations and guidance, support staff at the state and other levels. State has requirements for bilingual staff in local programs. State offers bilingual, dual immersion, and other approaches that support home language as well as English acquisition. State policies support DLL children, for example, by requiring that outreach and materials be provided in the home language, requiring that children are assessed in their home language, or providing programs with additional funding to help serve DLL children. Some mix of this is required.

PM: This holds in some sector but not others, or the state has some provisions and support but no requirements.

NM: Limited guidance and support or requirements for English only.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High quality teaching.** Teachers have high expectations in a system with high expectations and teaching practice is good to excellent. This requires teachers who focus on intentional teaching that strongly supports achievement and socio-emotional development, as well as approaches to learning including curiosity, a love of learning, persistence and strong sense of self-efficacy. The strongest evidence of high-quality teaching comes from representative samples directly observed using standardized measures (e.g., CLASS,



ECERS-R).<sup>11</sup> Strong structural features of programs are not by themselves enough to conclude that teaching is high quality. However, weak structural features are enough to conclude that high quality teaching is not taking place.

FM: ECERS-R, CLASS, or other scores show that teaching in the vast majority of classrooms is strong: specifically ECERS >5, CLASS scores > 5 on Emotional Support and Organization and > 4 on Instructional Support. This is not rigid. A program that scored above 3 on Instructional Support but with other evidence of good teaching and effectiveness would fully meet the criteria. If state regulations, guidance, technical assistance and other activities provide systemic support that seems strong enough to produce high quality teaching, this may be scored FM in the absence of representative (e.g., statewide) observation. Evidence of strong child gains in learning and development can contribute to the scoring, but it is not conclusive, as learning is influenced by factors outside the classroom.

PM: This is fully met in some sector (e.g., public schools only). Representative data show an ECERS-R average near 5 or a CLASS Instructional Support >3 (again this is not rigid if other evidence indicates high quality). The state's efforts may be strong enough to support high quality teaching, but are not strong in every respect.

NM: Direct observation indicates that most programs are not good or better. Rated NM if there are no recent statewide observation data and the state's capacity to systemically support high-quality teaching is not strong. Rated not determined (ND) if no recent data are available and a clear judgment of support for high quality teaching cannot be made from other information.

**Child assessments.** Child assessments are aligned with standards and are used to inform teaching with a focus on improving outcomes for children. Assessments inform administrators, teachers, and others who support teacher improvement. The state provides training and other supports provided to ensure teachers and program leaders can use assessments well.

FM: Regulations and guidance specify the use of assessments to inform teaching. These are part of a continuous improvement system with coaching or other professional development of staff around use of assessment that is strong evidence. Training is provided in the use of assessments.

PM: The above holds in some sector (e.g., public schools only), or the state has some of these provisions and support but use of assessments is not required or state capacity to support is limited.

NM: No, or very limited, guidance and support.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Data are collected and regularly used at all levels from the teacher on up to inform decisions regarding practice and improvement. Independent evaluation has been conducted, preferably within the last

10 years. The state supports the use of data for decision-making by others and uses data to drive its decisions. Ideally, there is a state-supported continuous improvement system operating at all levels.

FM: Regulations and guidance specify and the state supports the use of data for decisions. If these are part of a continuous improvement system that is strong evidence. Some evidence that data is used at the state level as well as the local level.

PM: This holds in some sector (e.g., public schools only), or the state has some provisions and support for data-driven decision-making, but state assessments, data systems and capacity to support are limited.

NM: No, or very limited, guidance and support or little quality data is available.

**Professional development.** Professional development is most effective when sustained as part of a continuous improvement cycle with high expectations for teachers. Professional development is both formal and informal (e.g., peer mentoring). The state and other organizations within the system have adequate capacity to provide sufficient quality and quantity of professional development.

FM: Regulations and guidance specify personalized professional development, which typically requires coaching, and there is adequate capacity to deliver it at the local and/or state levels. Ideally, there is policy that supports this systemically. Evidence could include requirements for an adequate number of trained staff to provide in-depth, regular coaching to teachers.

PM: This holds in some sector (e.g., public schools only), or the state has some provisions and support but it is too limited with respect to reach or hours to support high quality.

NM: The state requires and offers no, or very limited, guidance and support for professional development.

**Integrated system.** Law, regulation, and (or) the state's activities align standards, curriculum, professional development, and assessment. The state has adequate capacity to support this through the office administering the program and interagency groups.

FM: Regulations and guidance specify well-designed comprehensive standards, approach to curriculum, assessments, and professional development or an improvement process that are all aligned with adequate supports to implement these as a system.

PM: This holds in some sector (e.g., public schools only), or the state has provisions and the elements but support to actually make it an operational system is too limited.

NM: No alignment.

## Overview of Findings

Our summary judgments regarding the 15 essential elements for each state and city program are displayed for easy reference in Table 2 below. We found nine state and city programs that met 10 of the 15 essential elements.

Table 2. State and City Ratings on 15 Essential Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs

State/City	Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
	Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
AL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	○	—	ND	●	●	●	●
AK	○	—	—	●	—	●	●	—	—	—	ND	●	○	○	○
AZ	—	○	—	—	—	—	●	—	—	—	—	○	●	●	○
AR	○	●	—	●	●	●	●	—	○	○	ND	●	●	○	○
CA	○	●	—	—	—	●	●	○	—	●	ND	●	—	○	●
CO	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	—	ND	●	●	○	○
CT SRP	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	—	ND	—	●	○	○
CT CDC	○	●	—	●	●	●	●	—	○	—	ND	—	○	—	○
DE	—	○	—	—	—	●	●	○	○	○	ND	●	○	●	○
DC	●	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	ND	○	○	○
FL	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	—	○	—	—	○	○	○	○
GA	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	—	●	●	●	●
HI	○	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	●	ND	●	—	●	○
IL	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	ND	○	●	●	●
IN	○	●	—	—	—	●	●	○	○	○	—	●	●	○	○
IA SV	—	—	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	○	ND	●	●	—	○
IA SVPP	—	—	●	●	—	●	●	—	○	○	ND	●	○	—	○
KS PP	—	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	●	●	ND	—	○	○	—
KS PK	—	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	●	●	ND	—	○	○	—
KY	○	●	○	●	—	●	●	—	●	○	○	●	○	○	○
LA	○	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	ND	●	●	○	●
ME	●	○	—	●	—	●	●	○	○	●	ND	○	●	●	○
MD	○	●	○	●	—	●	●	○	●	○	ND	●	●	○	●
MA UPK	○	○	—	●	—	●	●	○	○	●	—	○	●	○	○
MA IPLE	○	○	—	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	ND	—	○	○	○
MI	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	○	●	ND	●	●	●	●
MN	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	—	●	●	○	○
MS	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	ND	○	○	○	○
MO	○	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	●
NE	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
NV	○	●	○	●	—	●	●	—	●	●	—	○	●	—	●
NJ ABBOTT	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○
NJ ECPA	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	ND	●	○	●	○
NJ ELLI	○	●	●	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	ND	●	○	●	○
NM	●	●	○	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●
NY	●	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	○	ND	○	○	○	○
NC	○	○	○	●	—	●	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	●	○
OH	○	—	—	—	—	●	●	○	○	○	ND	●	●	○	○
OK	○	○	●	●	—	●	●	—	●	●	ND	○	○	—	○

State/City	Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
	Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
OR	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	—	○	○	ND	○	○	—	○
PA EABG	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	—	—	—	ND	—	—	—	○
PA K4	○	●	—	—	—	—	●	—	○	—	ND	—	—	○	○
PA HSSAP	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	○	○	—	ND	○	○	○	○
PA PKC	○	●	—	●	—	●	●	○	○	—	ND	○	●	●	○
RI	●	○	—	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	ND	●	○	●	●
SC 4K	○	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	—	ND	○	—	—	○
SC CDEP	○	○	—	●	●	●	●	○	○	—	—	○	○	—	○
TN	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	—	●	○	—	—	○	—	—
TX	○	—	○	—	—	—	●	—	—	—	ND	○	○	○	○
VT	●	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	●	○	—	●	●	○	○
VA	●	○	—	●	○	●	●	—	○	○	ND	○	○	○	—
WA	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	○	—	ND	●	○	●	○
WV	●	●	—	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	—	●	●	○	○
WI	○	○	○	—	—	—	●	—	●	○	ND	—	○	○	○
DN	●	●	—	—	—	●	●	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	○
SA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	○	●	—	●	○	●	○
SF	●	●	—	—	—	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	—	○



## Alabama

### First Class: The Alabama Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program

First Class: The Alabama Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (FCVPK) program has grown steadily since it first offered full-day preschool education for 750 four-year-olds in 2000. By 2014, Alabama met its goal of having at least one pre-K classroom in each of its 67 counties following two consecutive years of \$10M budget increases adding 100 new state-funded pre-K classrooms annually. Through its mixed-model delivery system enrollment increased to more than 5,000 in 2014, representing 9 percent of age-eligible children. In 2015-2016, increased funding enabled 3,600 additional children to be enrolled in 200 new classrooms, bringing the total to 600 classrooms statewide.

During the past 3 years, statewide enrollment has expanded from 6 to 18 percent. All state residents meeting the age criteria are automatically eligible for the program. Funds are competitively awarded and grantees must locally match the award; sliding-scale parent fees can be included in the matching funds. VCVPK classrooms are housed in many different locations, including Head Start programs, private child care centers, community organizations, faith-based centers, colleges and universities, military agencies and public schools.

FCVPK was one of only 6 state-funded pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014, a level maintained since 2005-2006. In 2014, Alabama was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$17.5 million to further expand the program.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 76.1 percent of age-eligible children in Alabama were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 90.1 of those were percent attending full-day programs.

In K-12 education, Alabama spent \$8,755 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 39<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In 2013, Gov. Bentley signed the [Alabama Accountability Act](#) that gives tax credits to parents who want to transfer to another public or private school. In the 2012-2013 school year, Alabama had the second-smallest share in the country of eighth grade students scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP math test (20 percent). Alabama schools reported a graduation rate of 80 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, slightly lower than the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Alabama ranked 20th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second of five tiers.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Alabama meets **11** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **one** other. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	○	–	ND	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

Alabama benefits from a particularly strong enabling environment formed by the collaborative work of elected officials, state agencies, business leaders, advocates, and philanthropy, all of which are aligned on delivering high-quality pre-K for every 4-year-old and proud of their success.

**Political will.** Strong political will is clearly evident, particularly from [Gov. Robert Bentley \(R\)](#) who wants to fully fund FCVPK by 2019. He recently co-authored a bipartisan op-ed in in [Forbes](#) with West Virginia Gov. Tomblin (D) on the benefits of providing quality early education. Budget committee chairs in both legislative chambers who champion FCVPK and a generally supportive legislature place Alabama as one of the strongest states in regard to political will and influence. Evidence can be found in state budgets which have increased FCVPK funding \$10M during each of the past 2 years. Gov. Bentley [pledges](#) to continue or hasten this pace for the duration of his term (2018), a message he reinforced at the Governor’s ECE Leadership Summit (February 2015) and demonstrated in his asking for an additional \$14M for FY 2017. Jennifer Ardis, Gov. Bentley’s Communications Director, has been engaged in promoting the Governor’s early education agenda.

Alabama’s business community has extended significant support to preschool since 2009-2010, when business leaders recommended the state legislature increase funding for preschool education. The [Business Council of Alabama](#) (BCA) collaborated with the [Alabama School Readiness Alliance](#) (ASRA) to create a pre-K task force that developed policy recommendations in 2012 for increasing access to high-quality prekindergarten throughout the state. The ASRA task force was led by co-chairs Mike Luce (Harbert Mgmt.) and Bob Powers (The Eufaula Agency). Since these recommendations were introduced, state funding and enrollment have increased dramatically and [recommendations for 2015](#) have been established. ASRA is a joint partnership of [A+ Education Partnership](#) (Caroline Novak, Pres), [Alabama Giving](#) (statewide grantmakers association), [Smart Start Alabama Partnership for Children](#) (Gail Piggott, ED), and [Voices for Alabama’s Children](#) (Melanie Bridgeforth). ASRA Exec. Dir. Allison (de la Torre) Muhendorf is interested in revising the cost estimates for fully funding FCVPK given the Governor’s expansion plans for FCVPK. Kellogg Foundation (Felicia deHaney & Todd Klunk) has also invested in Alabama’s early learning efforts.

Leadership also extends to business, philanthropy, and advocates (esp. Alabama Power Foundation and PNC) which have a history of effectively working together to advance high quality early education. Alabama Power Foundation (Zeke Smith, Exec VP) contributed \$160K to early education efforts last year and has pledged \$200K for the current year. PNC (Brian Bucher, Regional Pres.) has also been a strong proponent of pre-K and an influential voice within the legislature.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Effective August 1, 2015, FCVPK’s administering agency, the Department of Children’s Affairs, was renamed the [Department of Early Childhood Education](#) (DECE). Appointed by

Gov. Bentley, Jeana Ross remains DECE head but her status as Commissioner changed to Secretary, now serving on the Governor's Cabinet.

DECE is responsible for administering FCVPK through its Office of School Readiness and other early learning efforts, including regional Alabama Children's Policy Councils, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Children First Trust Fund, state Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the Office of Early Learning and Family Support with its First Teacher home visiting program using HIPPPY and PAT models.

Tracye Strichik, Dir. of Early Learning and Family Support, has strong field experience in early education having served as a lab school director at Auburn and primary teacher (8 years in kindergarten). DECE Director of Administrative Services and Children's Affairs Jan Hume, former director of ASRA for 7 years, who brings strong management skills, recently completed the CEELO Leadership Academy. AL Department of Education (ADE) Superintendent Tommy Bice is highly supportive of children having access to high-quality pre-K. ADE maintains responsibility for early childhood education and Title I services for preschool-age children.

### **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Alabama requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. There has not been required salary parity between pre-K teachers and K-3 teachers. However, in the 2015-2016 year the state introduced policies to create parity including with raises going forward, therefore meeting the criteria of this Essential Element.

**Adult-child ratios.** Alabama has a maximum class size of 18 four-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10 which, in practice is 1:9. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22. Head Start programs offering FCVPK may apply for a waiver of maximum class size to serve 20 children with a 1:10 ratio, still within Essential Element guidelines.

**Learning time.** Children attend FCVPK five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 6.5 hours per day. Wrap-around services extending the length of the school day are common in most nonpublic settings. This "dosage" of early learning time is consistent with that found in high-quality, effective programs.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and assistant teacher with at least a CDA are present at all times during the 6.5 hour education program. Itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Alabama and DECE are in a continuous cycle of developing and revising the early learning standards. The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children were last revised in 2012 are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Further revision is anticipated shortly in response to last year's revisions to ADE's kindergarten performance standards that will occur collaboratively between DCA and DECE.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** While there is no approved research-based curriculum used by all programs, FCVPK requires use of a curriculum incorporating the early learning standards that are aligned to kindergarten content standards and Teaching Strategies GOLD objectives. Previously DCA maintained an approved list of curricula that were available for programs to voluntarily adopt. At present, ADE has a cycle for K-12 textbook adoption but its authority does not extend to pre-K.



**Support for students with special needs.** DECE actively promotes inclusive settings for children in FCVPK settings despite reporting only 30 children with special needs were enrolled in FCVPK. DECE is working with ADE to strengthen inclusive mixed-model pre-K classrooms as ADE is under pressure from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to move away from its “50-50” composition policy when providing special education services to preschoolers within schools. DECE also invests in developmental screening of all children using Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3, and promotes use of a tiered system of intervention, Response to Intervention (RtI), to provide differentiated instruction.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Alabama reported that in 2014, 1,655 of the 5,505 FCVPK students (30 percent) were English Language Learners. Despite this sizable number, state policy does not regulate services for ELL; rather, local programs are instructed to develop ELL plans to address the educational needs of the students and their families.

### **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Effective, developmentally appropriate teaching practices are strongly emphasized and supported by DECE. Teacher-child interactions are an important component, and DECE trained 700 teachers, coaches, and mentors in the use of CLASS in 2014-2015 to assess and improve instructional practices. CLASS data are not publicly available.

**Child assessments.** TS GOLD is required for formative assessment in all FCVPK classrooms. The ability of program and state administrators to examine GOLD data in real time has immediate effects in the classroom for designing curricula and differentiating instruction with the support of classroom coaches and program monitors.

Teachers are supported in using GOLD through ongoing coaching as well as mandated participation in a GOLD introduction and lab for new teachers. Site directors are also required to participate in trainings on GOLD, including one on reporting data.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Alabama’s use of data is a major factor contributing to the state’s commitment to improving and expanding access to its pre-K program. Data are used by DECE to allocate resources to programs and support professional development for pre-K teachers. Child assessment data are in the process of being incorporated into the state longitudinal data system (SLDS), using the Baseline Edge program management system.

Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) in collaboration with the University of Alabama-Birmingham is collecting PPVT data as part of a longitudinal study. PARCA released results of an FCVPK report finding, “Students who participated in Alabama's First Class Pre-K program academically outperform their peers once they reach elementary school, and the advantages conferred by pre-K participation persist at least through the 6th grade;” however, details on methodology were not available for review. The FCVPK evaluation with PARCA is ongoing.

In 2008-2009, the FCVPK program was assessed for program impact, child outcomes, and process quality.

**Professional development.** Recognizing that ongoing coaching can help teachers improve instruction and student outcomes, every program is supported by a classroom coach (1 per 15 classrooms) and monitor (1 per 30 programs) for continuous improvement. Monitors work with program administrators to ensure the ELC grants are properly administered, provide appropriate leadership to teaching staff in concert with coaches to improve instruction, and support the development of leadership skills necessary for effective program management and improvement. DECE

provides at least half of the 30 hours of required annual professional development to ensure high-quality teaching. This past year, the focus was on CLASS, with an emphasis on Instructional Support.

**Integrated system.** Standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction are integral components of Alabama's integrated system emphasizing data-driven decisions on the state, local, and program level. The decision to focus professional development on teacher-child interaction using CLASS was based on child assessment data and feedback from coaches, monitors, and teachers. Following DECE Deputy Commissioner Jan Hume's participation in the CELO Leadership Academy, DECE will incorporate results-based accountability reporting for all programs under DECE's auspice. Full integration of all early childhood data into an aligned system linked to K-12 remains in progress; a task that will be enhanced through the restructured DECE.

### **Key Contacts**

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### **Resources**

Adams, J. (2012). Analysis of ARMT scores for recipients of First Class/OSR pre-K. Birmingham, AL: Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.

Alabama School Readiness Alliance Pre-K Task Force. (2015). 2015 recommendations for the expansion of First Class Pre-K in Alabama. Birmingham, AL: Author.

The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education: First Class Pre-K website.

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama report on First Class.



## Alaska

### Alaska Pre-Kindergarten Program

The Alaska Pilot-Kindergarten Project (AP3) began in 2009-2010, serving 4-year-olds in six school districts through competitive grants. In 2011-2013, the program was renamed the Alaska Prekindergarten Program. Funding is granted to public schools that may subcontract with faith-based settings, family child care centers, Head Start programs, and private child care centers. A majority of programs operate in combined public school and Head Start programs. The federal Head Start guidelines share similarities with Alaska's pre-K program eligibility requirements, with eligibility based on family income at, or below, 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). However, if space is available, programs can take a maximum of 35 percent of children from families between 100 and 130 percent FPL.

In 2014-2015, 319 children attended the Alaska Pre-Kindergarten Program, 3.1 percent of the state's 4-year-old population.

Alaska Pre-Elementary was one of only 7 state-funded pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2015.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 82.5 percent of age-eligible children in Alaska were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 62.2 percent attending full-day programs.

In K-12 education, Alaska spent \$18,175 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation. In the 2012-2013 school year, Alaska had the second-smallest share in the country of eighth grade students scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP math test (20 percent). Alaska schools reported a graduation rate of 71.8 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, significantly lower than the national average. Alaska's NAEP average scores were below the national average in reading and math at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Alaska ranked 15th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second of five tiers.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Alaska meets **four** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	–	–	●	–	●	●	–	–	–	ND	●	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Alaska’s state pre-K program had a total budget of \$2.5 million and served children in eight districts for the 2012-2013 school year. There was an \$800,000 drop in funding in 2013-2014 and slated for closure in 2014-2015. Gov. Bill Walker (R) proposed budget in 2015 called for the elimination of the pre-kindergarten program as well as additional reduction of \$820,000 in grants for other early childhood programs. Supporters of pre-K were successful in ensuring that \$2,000,000 of funding was put back into the FY 2017 budget. This funding allowed Alaska to offer renewal grants to districts currently receiving funds and development grants for districts looking to build strong pre-K programs. The renewal grants provide support for existing preK programs, but put the expectation on districts to develop sustainability plans for future years. The Development Grants are designed for school districts and their partners to develop new pre-K programs. Development grants funding can be used to complete a needs assessment; strategic plan that includes collaboration activities; a pre-K program design; and a funding plan. All of these elements are expected to include stakeholder feedback.

The Alaska Early Childhood Advocacy Group is a coalition of early childhood organizations including: Alaska Head Start Association, Alaska Infant Learning Program Association, Best Beginnings, State Office, and threadAlaska, state Child Care Program Office, Department of Health and Human Services.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development is appointed by the Governor. The nine-member board includes a military advisory member and a student advisory member. In June 2015 the State Board began the process of revising its strategic plan to guide its leadership as well as the actions of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED). Informed by the perspectives of superintendents, legislators, and school board members, the State Board established three priorities as the foundation of its strategic plan, however there is nothing specific about pre-K and its future funding. In July 2016, Michael Johnson, was appointed the Commissioner EED. The early learning lead for the Department is Anji Gallanos who also serves as the Head Start State Collaboration Office Director. Anji Gallanos has worked in the field of early education for 20 years and is a certificated preschool special education teacher. The office has a staff of two.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Teachers must be state certified, with a BA in ECE or a related field or specialized training in a related field. Assistant teachers must have a current CDA, 12 ECE credits, or an AA in ECE or with specialized training in early education or a related field. State policies do not require pre-K teachers, in either a public school or non-public school setting, to have salary parity with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Alaska requires a maximum class size of 20 children, with a staff-child ratio of 1:10 or better.

**Learning time.** All programs are part day and must operate for at least 3 hours per day, but cannot operate for more than 5 hours per day. Programs operate for 4 or 5 days per week, for a minimum of 14 hours per week, though the actual schedule is determined locally. Programs may partner with child care or other services to provide wraparound care.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and assistant teacher with at least a CDA are present at all times.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Alaska's early learning guidelines (ELGs) were written in 2007. An independent alignment of the ELGs and the new standards has been completed. Guidelines are aligned to the Alaska Developmental Profile, the Head Start Child Outcome Framework, and TS GOLD.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Pre-K programs are required to focus on all areas of a child's development and balance the use teacher-directed activities with child-initiated activities. Curriculum is expected to be aligned with the ELGs.

**Support for students with special needs.** If parents and members of the IEP team determine that pre-K is the least restrictive environment for the child, the child could receive services through pre-K even if he or she did not meet the age requirements. Exact number of special education students is unknown, but it is estimated at 10 percent of enrollment.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In 2015-2016, 16 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in Alaska were identified as dual language learners (DLLs). However, there are not any state policies that support teachers in meeting the needs of DLLs or their families.

### **Strong Program Practices**

**High quality teaching.** Starting in 2016, programs are assessed using the CLASS. The CLASS tool is used to build on professional development and not program monitoring.

**Child assessments.** The TS GOLD assessment was piloted by the state three times per year in two-thirds of the programs during the 2011-2012 school year. The state required its use for all grantees in the new competition. TS GOLD reports are used as both a formative ongoing assessment, and at year's end as an observational snapshot of the child's growth across domains aligned with the Alaska Developmental Profile. EED plans to work with districts and staff to ensure TS GOLD online training opportunities are available. Districts with classroom-based programs are required to sign a TS GOLD Subscription Agreement and an EED TS GOLD Online Assurance page.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** As previously noted programs are assessed using TS GOLD. Child outcome data are collected and used to evaluate the entire statewide program and all of its facets. This includes how Alaska can better support preschool educators and staff, orient and train educators and staff, and encourage parent and community engagement and relationships.

An evaluation of the pre-K program was completed in the 2010-2011 school year, determining process quality as well as program impact and child results based on pre- and post-assessments using the DIAL II, PPVT, and ECERS instruments. The study is not available online.

**Professional development.** Teachers are required to complete six credit hours every five years. In 2016-2017, pre-K teachers will be eligible to participate in MyTeachingPartner, an online research-based coaching program operated by Teachstone, the entity that developed CLASS.

**Integrated system.** The Alaska System for Early Education Development (SEED) is the state's early childhood professional development system for Head Start, the Tribal Childcare Association, State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Department of Labor. SEED is the state's registry and maintains the career lattice and teacher competencies. Alaska's early learning guidelines are aligned with TS GOLD. Districts must agree to implement a longitudinal data system that will assist with monitoring measurable outcomes for young children moving into K-2.

### **Key Contacts**

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907-465-4862

### **Resources**

ASD Preschool Programs information brochure.

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Request for Applications: Alaska Pre-Kindergarten Program: FY 2015



## Arizona

### Quality First Scholarships

Arizona began funding preschool education programs in 1991. Supplemental services for preschool, first-through-third-grade education, and full-day kindergarten, were supported by the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) from 1996 to 2010. Children from families with an income less than or at 185 percent of the federal poverty level were qualified for ECBG-funded programs. With the requirement that some of the funding was passed through to either private child care centers or faith-based programs, the ECBG prekindergarten funds were distributed to school districts. Preschool programs that received ECBG funding had to be approved by an organization permitted by the state, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). ECBG funds were frozen in fiscal year 2010, due to budget restraints, and then revoked.

Passed by ballot initiative in November of 2006, Proposition 203 increased the tobacco tax (80 cents per pack of cigarettes) to fund grants to increase the quality of and access to early childhood development and health services for children up to five years of age and their families. Proposition 203 funds are administered by an Early Childhood Development and Health Board subsequently renamed First Things First (FTF). FTF oversees two child care scholarship programs, which were merged together in the 2012-2013 school year. These programs provide incentives for programs to participate in the QRIS, Quality First, as payment rates are higher for programs with higher ratings. The program spent about \$36 million on more than 10,000 three- and four-year-olds in 2014-2015. Quality First Scholarships were provided to more than 3000 children 0-2 years of age, as well.

Arizona's Quality First Scholarships program met three of 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks in 2014-2015, missing the requirements of lead teachers having a BA and early childhood specialization, assistant teacher specialized training, screenings and immunizations, ratio and class size, and at least one meal a day.

Arizona was one of five states that received a federal Preschool Development Grant totaling [\\$80 million](#) over the next four years.

In K-12 education, Arizona ranked 49<sup>th</sup>, slightly below average for spending, at \$9,394 per pupil in 2013, according to [Ballotpedia](#). Arizona's NAEP scores were slightly below national averages on math and reading at 4<sup>th</sup> grade and its graduation rate of 75.1 percent is below the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and ranked Arizona 51<sup>st</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, the very weakest. In 2014, **Arizona** withdrew from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which developed Common Core-aligned examinations, but as of July 2015, Arizona is still implementing Common Core.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 77.8 percent of age-eligible children in Arkansas were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 83 percent attending full-day programs.



## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Arizona’s Quality First Scholarship program meets **three** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** elements.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	○	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	○	●	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey (R) was sworn in January 5, 2015, succeeding Gov. [Jan Brewer](#), a fellow Republican who was barred by term limits from seeking re-election in 2014. Gov. Ducey has supported some legislation that affects young children, such as [SB 1457](#) which restored KidsCare to an estimated 30,000 children. Enrollment in KidsCare, the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) had been frozen since January 1, 2010 due to lack of funding. The state zeroed out funding for it’s preschool program, and FTF has funded child care subsidies that formerly were provided by the state. State officials have on multiple occasions sought to [repurpose](#) FTF funding away from early care and education.

There are several education advocacy groups such as the [Stand for Children Alliance](#), which supports pre-K, but is more focused on funding and quality in the K-12 arena, and the [Children's Action Alliance Arizona](#) which has been advocating for children’s health issues and the use of tobacco funds. Nadine Basha was instrumental in the effort to seek approval for the initiative, was the initial chair of the FTF Board and continues to sit on the Board.

On the local level there has been some movement to put together ballot initiatives in Phoenix and Tucson; feasibility studies on implementing universal pre-K have been conducted in both Tempe and Mesa.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The [Early Childhood Education](#) unit within the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) (Lauren Zbyszinsk, Director), administers the Head Start State Collaboration grant and special education preschool, however FTF has the funding and administrative authority for Quality First Scholarships and has a partnering agreement for service delivery with the local United Way affiliate as per [A.R.S. Title 8, Chapter 13](#).

FTF is administered through Regional Partnership Councils, including 18 county-based Councils and 10 tribal Councils that span the entire state. The 18 geographically defined Councils are largely constructed along county lines, except for the major metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. Local [Regional Partnership Councils](#) determine the level of funding for Quality First Scholarships based on data and information specific to each region.

United Way provides administrative oversight and services related to scholarship reporting, monitoring, and payment through an agreement with FTF. Private child care, public schools, Head Start settings, tribally regulated,

family child care homes, and faith-based programs are eligible to participate in the Quality First Scholarships program. Reimbursement rates were determined by a cost of quality study conducted by FTF in 2010. Rates increase with the rated quality level of the program, center based programs receive higher rates than family child care homes.

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Twenty-five percent of lead teachers in both public and nonpublic participants in Quality First Scholarships programs must have at least 12 college credit hours in early childhood or related fields, a certificate of completion in ECE or child development from a community college, or a CDA. Certification was not required in 2014-2015, though the ADE requires lead teachers in all public school early childhood programs to be certified in Early Childhood Education (Birth–grade 3) as of July 2012. A Bachelor’s degree is not required. Teachers in the Quality First Scholarship program do not have salary parity with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** According to [AZ licensing standards](#) for child care facilities, for 3- year-olds the maximum ratio is 1:13 with a maximum class size of 26; for 4-year-olds the maximums are a ratio of 1:15 and class size of 30.

**Learning time.** The most common operating schedule in public school settings is a part-day schedule, which is a minimum of 3 hours per day (no less than 12 hours per week), and no less than 3 days per week on a school year calendar. The most common operating schedule in nonpublic school settings is a school- or extended-day on a full calendar year.

Although there is no formal state level partnership, multiple Head Start programs participate in Quality First and some use Quality First Scholarships to extend the day and/or serve additional children. Organizations are also able to blend funds and use part-time scholarships that would support extended-day services for children.

**Two adults in the classroom.** One adult is allowed in the classroom if there are fewer than 15 children in a 4-year-old classroom.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [Arizona Early Learning Standards](#) were revised in 2013, are comprehensive, and align with the Head Start Outcomes and AZ Kindergarten Standards. All participating early care and education program administrators and Lead Teachers are required to participate in the introductory training on the Arizona Early Learning Standards and the Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The ADE does not endorse any one preschool curriculum. Quality First Scholarship programs must align their curriculum with the Arizona Early Learning Standards and the Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines to participate in Quality First Scholarships. Programs’ curriculum alignment is monitored through Quality First (Arizona’s QRIS); all programs are required to participate. The assessor [reviews](#) lesson plans during a monitoring visit.

**Support for students with special needs.** Children who are receiving special education services are counted in the enrollment total. In 2013-2014, only 1 percent of the children who received Quality First Scholarships, received special education services.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Almost 30 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in Arizona are dual language learners (DLLs), however there are no state policies as to how children are identified as DLL in pre-K

programs. Arizona's Quality First Scholarship program provides recruitment and enrollment materials in the family's home language.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** ECERS and CLASS assessments are used in the Quality First Scholarship programs, however scores were not available for review. Some participating programs are at only a two-star level. Even a three-star rating requires only an average ECERS score of 4 or a CLASS instruction score of 2.5.

**Child assessments.** The ADE has been leading an effort to align assessments, including child formative assessments with Local Education Agencies, FTF, Head Start, Tribal communities, and child care settings. They are currently using TS GOLD and providing resources to programs.

Quality First Scholarship programs are not required to use TS GOLD, but the use of child portfolios and a method to document children's developmental progress are required in the QRIS system which they are required to participate in.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Data collected by FTF are used to inform decision-making, monitor grantee performance, enhance program effectiveness and measure improved outcomes resulting from the collective investments of Arizona's early childhood system.

Through participation in Quality First (Arizona's QRIS), a Quality First assessor visits the program to observe classrooms and interview teachers. The assessor then rates the environment, curriculum, and teacher-child interactions. These scores then determine an initial Quality First Star Rating (not made public) and the supports and benefits the program is eligible to receive.

A validation study of Quality First started is currently being conducted.

**Professional development.** All programs that are eligible to accept Quality First Scholarships are assigned a Quality First coach based on the program's initial assessment. The coach reviews the assessments and develops an improvement plan. Coaches visit each program on a regular basis, from four to six hours per month. In addition, FTF funds scholarships and training opportunities.

**Integrated system.** Some of the components within Arizona's early childhood system are aligned. The [Arizona School Readiness Framework](#) (ASRF) establishes common language around school readiness; develops a clear outline of the readiness framework; determines the roles of standards, effective instruction, and curriculum; and identifies meaningful, well-aligned assessment of readiness to facilitate individualization of instruction. The [Assessment Continuum Guide for Pre-K through Third Grade in Arizona](#) (2016) aligns screening measures, environmental assessments, teacher-child interaction assessments, formative assessments, and Kindergarten entry assessments.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

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[First Things First](#) website.

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## Arkansas

### Arkansas Better Chance/ Arkansas Better Chance for School Success

The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) and Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) programs were founded as part of a statewide education reform initiative in 1991. ABC was initially funded only through a dedicated sales tax, between 2001 and 2007, an excise tax on packaged beer provided additional funding. Forty percent of the program's overall financial support must be local contributions (either in-kind or monetary). The program does receive some federal funding as well.

As additional funds became available in the 2004-2005 program year, the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) was launched. Three- and four-year-olds in families whose income falls below 200 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for the ABCSS program. Initially, only those districts where at least 75 percent of fourth-grade children achieved below "proficient" on state benchmarks exams in math and English and districts (which classified them as being in academic distress or school improvement status) were eligible for ABCSS funding. It has since been expanded to offer services to children in other districts that qualify as well.

This summary describes both ABC and ABCSS programs together (ABC programs) as they have related requirements and standards; any differences will be noted. There were 20,023 children enrolled in 2013-2014, representing 13 percent of 3-year-olds and 38 percent of 4-year-olds. Funding from the state was \$111 million including state and TANF funds, amounting to \$5,544 per child. The program was flat-funded in 2014-2015.

Both ABC and ABCSS utilize the same regulations except for eligibility. Children are able to participate in ABC programs if family income exceeds 200 percent of FPL if they have other risk factors, including: developmental delay, foster care, family aggression, low parental education level, having a parent in active overseas military duty, non-English speaking family members, a teen parent, or low birth weight. A sliding scale applies to families with incomes between 200 and 250 percent of FPL.

Pre-K access through the program is offered in diverse settings, including through Head Start, service cooperatives, public schools, private business, and nonprofit organizations. In 2014, Arkansas was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$14.9 million.

The Arkansas program meets 9 NIEER benchmarks; they do not earn the teacher credential benchmark. In an unusual practice in Arkansas the term "lead teachers" refers only to one head teacher at a site and not to every teacher leading a classroom. Lead teachers in a public school must hold a standard Arkansas teacher license with P-4 certification and in a nonpublic-school-based program must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. When there are multiple classrooms in a single location, the teacher of the second (and third, etc.) classroom is only required to have an associate degree in early childhood education or early childhood development. In addition, state policy allows programs to hire staff under an approved staff qualifications plan, while they are completing coursework to obtain minimum credentialing.

In K-12 education, Arkansas ranks slightly below average for education spending, at \$9,394 per pupil in 2013, about the same per pupil on public education as Missouri, but less than Louisiana and more than Mississippi, according to [Ballotpedia](#). Arkansas' NAEP scores were slightly below national averages on math and reading at 4<sup>th</sup> grade and its graduation rate of 85 percent is on par with the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and ranked Arkansas 48<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, among the very weakest. In 2015, Gov. Hutchinson formed a Common Core review panel. The panel recommended that the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam be changed to a more nationally recognized test, such as the ACT but did not call for an outright end to the use of Common Core.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 77.8 percent of age-eligible children in Arkansas were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 83 percent attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Arkansas' Arkansas Better Chance/ Arkansas Better Chance for School Success program meets **seven** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **five** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	●	●	●	–	○	○	ND	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

### Rationale

#### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson (R) has been a leader for early childhood. This is the third Governor supporting early childhood in the state, and the first Republican. After his election, Gov. Hutchinson made public comments about supporting pre-K and noted his support for the state's bid for a federal preschool expansion grant. The program has not received a permanent funding increase since 2008. During the 2015 legislative session, early education was able to secure a small one-time increase. The Governor recently has expressed support for increasing the state's investment in pre-K, but offered no specifics.

In the Legislature, there are some real champions, some who have been there for a long time. From 2004-2007 there was a \$100M investment in pre-K. There are term limits, however, so this is a challenge for continuing support, which would require educating new legislators. Legislative leadership has stated that they have other priorities for the next biennium that would preempt increases for pre-K.

[Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families](#) is active, and was instrumental in getting the original \$100 million funding, along with some smaller groups focused on specific issues. The [Rockefeller Foundation](#) and the [Walton](#)

Family Foundation are involved in the ForwARd Campaign, to improve educational opportunities in Arkansas, and that will continue to be a strategic initiative going forward.

The State Chamber of Commerce and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission were also instrumental in the initial funding campaign.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Act 1132 (1997) established the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE) within the Arkansas Department of Human Services to enhance the coordination of child care and early childhood education programs within the state. DCCECE includes 13-15 staff focused on pre-K, two of whom are paid for with the Preschool Expansion Grant funds. ABC programs are funded through an appropriation in the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Public School Fund budget. ADE contracts with DCCECE to administer the programs. DCCECE is responsible for all operational duties associated with pre-K and providing reports to the Joint Legislative Committee on Education and the State Board of Education who has the final authority for approval of rules and grants. DCCECE works closely with ADE, and partners with universities (University of Arkansas and Arkansas State) for evaluation and monitoring.

Tonya Williams (Director, DCCECE) has years of leadership experience in her current position and her prior role as Arkansas' first Head Start State Collaboration Director. She has strong relationships with ADE staff, the chief state school officer, and the governor's office.

### **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** In Arkansas, at least one teacher in a public school site, not classroom, must hold a standard Arkansas teacher license with P-4 certification. In a non-public school, at least one lead teacher must have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. For all programs with multiple classrooms at a single location, the teacher of the second classroom shall hold, at a minimum, an associate degree in early childhood education or early childhood development. More than 80 percent of teachers are reported to have a BA or higher degree, despite the fact that this is not required in every classroom.

From 2004 to 2007, Arkansas began developing a salary parity initiative. This work resulted in a Core Quality More! with a salary schedule. Unfortunately the state has not had an increase in funding since then to support maintaining the parity and the salary schedule for teachers is based on 2007 data.

Pay parity with public school teachers is not in policy, although there is a requirement for 30 percent fringe benefits. The state provides guidelines around paid planning and PD time, but most other benefits for teachers are locally determined.

**Adult-child ratios.** For both 3- and 4-year-olds the ratio is 1:10 and a maximum class size of 20. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** The program requires 7 instructional hours per day, 5 days per week, through the academic year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** When there are more than 10 children in the classroom, two adults are required.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework for Three and Four Year Old Children outlines a framework for 3- to 5-year-old services, describes development of the framework, and was revised in 2013. Standards are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and the Kellogg Foundation has provided funding to help align the early learning standards and the Public Education Learning Standards.



**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Arkansas has a requirement that programs can only use a set of approved curricula, vetted through a committee. The committee ensures it is either comprehensive, covering all domains of child development, or if not comprehensive than it is labeled as supplemental. However, the process is unclear and the list includes 23 comprehensive curricula, including published curricula and approaches, such as Project Approach and Reggio Emilia-inspired.

During the grant application process, potential ABC programs are required to identify a selected curriculum and describe the plans for implementation of responsive instruction and learning environments that are aligned with the state's early learning standards. It is up to the programs to ensure teachers have adequate training on curriculum. ABC funds may be utilized for professional development in curriculum instruction.

**Support for students with special needs.** The Special Education Program for children ages 3 to 5 years, is administered through Early Childhood Special Education at the ADE and viewed as "active partners with ABC to assist children with special needs." ABC teachers are expected to support Early Education Special Education teachers so that the IEP is implemented in the natural and least restrictive environment. In 2013-2014, 4 percent of the 20,023 pre-K children received special education services.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Arkansas does collect data about children in their preschool programs who are English Language Learners (ELLs). The state requires that recruitment and information materials be provided in languages other than English, primarily Spanish. Learning standards and professional development requirements related to cultural awareness and literacy standards are part of state policy, but most practice related to ELLs are locally determined.

According to the US Census Bureau, 7.2 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

### **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** ECERS and CLASS are used in the ABC programs. The state is hoping to build the CLASS into the QRIS, but may revise the regulations to include 'an assessment for classroom quality.' CLASS or ECERS scores are not available for review. In a small sample (n=68) of classrooms studied by NIEER in 2005 the average ECERS-R score was 5.26.

**Child assessments.** Arkansas uses Work Sampling System (WSS) in pre-K with data collection required three times a year. There is robust training around WSS conducted by a contracted university. PD starts with introducing the tool, focusing on some areas of the tools, implementing all domains, and then helping programs examine what the data are telling them. Initial Work Sampling training is required for all new classroom staff (one-time); Work Sampling Refresher is required annually (accessible via webinar, etc.) and the Work Sampling Curriculum Connections is highly recommended for existing classroom staff but not required. There are coaches available to work individually with programs.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The state has several mechanisms to collect monitoring activities: structured observations of classroom quality are conducted using ECERS or CLASS; documentation of children's learning using WSS and Ounce are collected three times per program year; there are annual monitoring visits for compliance with ABC Rules and Regulations; PAS is used every three years; and there is a review of program facilities and safety procedures via licensing review three times a year. ABC programs are not

required by state regulations to participate in the QRIS, however programs are required to meet Quality Standards in the ABC classroom area.

In a 2013 [report](#) on outcomes in the Arkansas program starting from the 2005-2006 school year, NIEER researchers found: “that the Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) Program had modest but meaningful long-term effects for children who participated, including significant positive effects on children’s receptive vocabulary and math through grade 2 and on literacy through grade 3. The authors also found that children who attended ABC pre-K were less likely to have been retained by the end of third grade than those who did not attend any pre-K, which can be seen as an early indicator of program’s effect on school success.” A study of impact at kindergarten entry was published in [Elementary School Journal](#).

**Professional development.** ABC funding includes a 1-hour slot for planning time. Use of that time is not mandated and there is flexibility within local programs to decide how to use it. Some of the programs report using that time to conduct team planning with a teacher assistant or across programs and early grades.

As noted above, there are regionalized coaches who provide local-level guidance on using data. Individual coaching is provided through foundation funding to support PD needs identified in the QRIS system.

For the program’s pre-K teachers, ABC offers funding for professional development, such as pursuing college degrees. Act 187 (2009) became effective in January 2011 and established the Birth through Prekindergarten Teaching Credential. Five institutions have been permitted to offer the credential, allowing an additional professional path for preschool teachers in the ABC program.

**Integrated system.** In curriculum selection, alignment to the Arkansas Early Childhood Framework is required, which is aligned with WSS. ABC programs are not required to participate in QRIS, but must meet the first level indicators. However, there has not been as much focus on intentional system integration across AED and DHS.

### **Key Contacts**

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### **Resources**

Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education

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## California State Preschool Program

The State Preschool Program (SPP), founded in 1965, has provided state-funded preschool throughout the state of California. Children who are at risk for neglect, abuse, family violence, or who are receiving protective services are provided preschool services through this program. The Prekindergarten and Family Literacy Program (PKFLP), molded after SPP, was founded in the 2007-2008 school year and offered half- and full-day services. PKFLP includes an additional literacy component for children from families at or below 70 percent of the state median income (SMI).

California streamlined the state's multiple early children education programs into one funding stream, through the California State Preschool Program Act, in 2008. All SPP, PKFLP, and General Child Care programs, part-day and full-day, that served preschool-age children, were merged into the California State Preschool Program (CSPP). The merged program served students for the first time during the 2009-2010 school year, providing services to 3- and 4-year-olds. Eligible families must have an income at or below 70 percent of the SMI. This requirement is waived for children receiving protective services or those who are at risk of exploitation, neglect, or abuse, as well as for families who are homeless, or receiving CalWORKS cash aid.

School districts, Head Start programs, and private and faith-based agencies apply to provide the program through a competitive application process. Based on families' eligibility and needs, the CSPP provides both full-day and part-day services, and also provides comprehensive services to children and families. Families must maintain eligibility throughout the entire school year to receive full-day services, though they can continue to receive part-day services if they are initially eligible but later experience a change in eligibility. Part-day preschools started charging a family fee beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, however these family fees were repealed for the 2014-2015 school year.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 80.1 percent of age-eligible children in California were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of them, 57 percent were attending full-day programs.

California received funding through the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) to implement a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early learning programs broadly including SPP. The grant also seeks to sustain quality improvement efforts in areas of teachers and teaching, child development and school readiness, and program and environment quality.

SPP meets four of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, missing the benchmarks for teacher and assistant teacher degrees; there is no class size limit; only Immunizations and physical and developmental assessments are required through Title 22; licensing laws and regulations require that all part-day programs provide at least a snack, not necessarily a full meal; and as of the 2010-2011 school year, California has moved from a regularly scheduled visit policy to a new monitoring schedule determined based upon program information which results in only 'as-needed' site visits.

In K-12 education, California ranks 36<sup>th</sup> highest for education spending, \$9,220 per pupil in 2013. California's graduation rate is above average at 80.4 percent, but NAEP test scores are below the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in Math and Reading. In 2013 California had almost 6.3 million students enrolled in 10,315 schools in 1,181 school districts. There was roughly one teacher for every 24 students, compared to the national average of 1:16. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions California ranked 6<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "strongest," which was in the first of five tiers.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The California Preschool Program meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. Some of the decisions about pre-K program policy are determined at the local level in California, therefore some local programs may exceed these Essential Elements ratings. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	—	—	—	●	●	○	—	●	ND	●	—	○	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Jerry Brown (D) currently in his fourth term as governor has not been vocal on pre-K and his approach has been to allow local counties and districts to take the lead at the local level rather than the state. Nevertheless, the CA Education Budget for 2015-2016 includes an increase in funding, including an increase of \$34.3 million (\$30.9 million Proposition 98, \$3.5 million General Fund) to provide access to full-day State Preschool for an additional 7,030 children from low-income working families. In addition, \$145 million will shift from General Child Care to State Preschool to allow full-day State Preschool providers that are LEAs to access a single funding stream (Proposition 98) in their full-day State Preschool contracts. Under the existing program, LEAs receive funding for full-day State Preschool from a combination of Proposition 98, General Fund, and the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Proposition 98 is a voter-approved constitutional amendment, guarantees minimum funding levels for k-12 schools and community colleges.

In October 2015 Gov. Brown vetoed the CA AB 47 State Preschool Program Act of 2015 which would have required all eligible children, who are not enrolled in transitional kindergarten to have access to the SPP the year before they enter kindergarten, if their parents wish to enroll them, contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funding in the annual Budget Act for that purpose. In his veto message, the governor stated the bill is unnecessary since the

discussion of the expansion of preschool occurs in the budgetary process.

CA AB 104 (2015) Chapter 13 provides supplemental funding to qualifying California state preschool classrooms, and requires a part-day preschool program to provide parenting education and to provide staff development for teachers in participating classrooms as a condition of receiving funds. It also requires that staff development strategies include promoting behavioral strategies and interventions for young children to improve kindergarten readiness. It sets the income eligibility limits for the 2015-16 fiscal year at 70 percent of the state median income that was in use for the 2007-08 fiscal year, sets the reimbursement rate at \$9,572.50. The cost-of-living rate would be increased annually by the Legislature.

The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 gradually moved the kindergarten cutoff age from December to September, resulting in all children being 5 years old at the beginning of kindergarten. A Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program was implemented under the act, offering a two-year kindergarten plan for 4-year-olds no longer age-eligible for the one-year kindergarten program. First offered in the 2012-2013 school year, TK uses the kindergarten regulations regarding class size, standards, funding, and serving English language learners, though locally determined kindergarten curricula must be age and developmentally appropriate. Students enrolled in TK are not regarded as being in pre-K by the state, but rather as in the first year of a two-year kindergarten program. As of fall 2013, there were 57,534 students reported as enrolled in TK.

The advocates have very strong voices in California, including First 5 California created by voters under Proposition 10 (1998), which added a tax on tobacco products to fund education, health, childcare, and other services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. Early Edge California (formerly Preschool California) works to ensure all children have the early experiences necessary to be successful learners by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, setting them on a path to college and career readiness. Children Now which has been advocating for California to protect recent investments and commitments to increase access to high-quality preschool. The Advancement Project a multiracial civil rights organization. The California Child Care Resource and Referral Network which has been helping create awareness about child care issues locally at the county level and statewide since 1980 and the Legislative Women's Caucus has been very active in advocating for expanding access to high-quality, affordable childcare and pre-K and helping put California at the forefront of early care and learning.

The California Expanding Early Learning Policy Partnership is California's state partnership for Alliance for Early Success. This partnership represents a long-term collaborative effort that aims to close the opportunity gap and prevent the school readiness and achievement gaps for California's students.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The California Department of Education's Early Education and Support Division (EESD) oversees SPP. Debra McMannis has been the Director of EESD since September 2013. Prior to this role she worked for 17 years at a local LEA that had early childhood programs, including SSP. The previous Director, Camille Maben, is now working at First 5 California (F5CA) as the Executive Director. EESD leads the RTT-ELC grant activities in partnership with F5CA.

EESD has over 100 staff members. Forty percent of them are Education Program Consultants who are involved in offering training and technical assistance to the SPP. Consultants typically work within a program unit and may have statewide or regional program responsibility.

State Superintendent Tom Toriakson is viewed as being supportive of pre-K and CDE's Blueprint for Great Schools Version 2.0 includes SPP and the Preschool Early Learning Foundations (CA's ELDS).

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** The Child Development Associate Teacher permit is the minimum requirement for the lead teacher in the classroom, though California does not use the term "lead teacher," thus exceeding the requirement of a CDA. The permit requires 12 units in ECE or child development and 50 days of work experience in an instructional capacity. It may be renewed one time for a five-year period. A CDA credential issued in California meets temporary alternative qualifications for the Associate Teacher permit. A teacher may also have the full Child Development Teacher permit, which requires a minimum of 40 semester units of education, including a minimum of 24 units in ECE or child development, and 175 days of work experience, or a Master Teacher permit.

Assistant teachers in the SPP are required to have a High School Diploma or equivalent. The optional Child Development Assistant Teacher Permit requires six credits in ECE or CD.

There are no salary compensation parity requirements between the SPP teachers and K-3 teachers. However, some school districts have been able to put their SPP teachers on the same scale as the K-12 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** California requires a staff-child ratio of 1:8 for 3- and 4-year-old classrooms. California does not have a maximum class size and programs typically enroll 24 children in the class.

**Learning time.** The part-day program is funded to operate at least 3 hours per day for a minimum of 175 days per year. The school-day program is funded to operate at least 6 hours per day for a minimum of 246 days per year. The majority of programs currently operate approximately 10 hours per day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** There are typically three adults in a classroom, due to programs enrolling 24 children and having a required staff-child ratio of 1:8.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [California Preschool Learning Foundations](#) (Foundations) developed in 2008, focused on social emotional development, language and literacy, mathematics and English language development. A second volume, released in December 2011, also focused on visual and performing arts as well as health and physical development. In September 2013, science and history/social science were addressed in a third and final volume.

The CDE/EESD released the [alignment](#) publication between the Foundations and Common Core State Standards. EESD sponsors a variety of training opportunities aimed at a variety of early childhood professionals. For teachers and administrators working in programs with preschool-aged children, the eleven regions [California Preschool Instructional Network \(CPIN\)](#) provides in depth training on all nine domains of the Foundations and [California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks](#) (Frameworks) as well as on-site technical assistance. Information sessions, trainings, and other professional development opportunities provide an overview of what the Foundations are, and also more focused training on specific Foundation domains and practical application in early learning settings. [California Early Childhood Online](#) provides free online modules on all nine preschool foundation domains.

The [California Faculty Initiative Project](#) offers opportunities for college faculty to learn about the Foundations and has created instructional guides that facilitate integration of content on the foundations into unit-bearing coursework.



**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The CDE does not approve texts, materials, or any particular curriculum for SPP. These are all local decisions. The Frameworks provide guidance for using the foundations in program planning, instructional strategies and professional development.

The Frameworks include ideas for how to intentionally integrate learning into children's play; implement child-directed and teacher-guided activities; plan environments, interactions, routines, and materials that engage children in learning; and individualize curriculum based on children's knowledge, skills, needs and interests. As previously mentioned, CPIN provides training on the Frameworks.

The California Preschool Program Guidelines provides guidance to early care and education administrators on how to develop high-quality preschool programs to support children's optimal learning and development and includes guidelines and examples of using the Framework.

During the SPP funding application, programs provide a written narrative for proposed services that will be provided by the contract including the curricular activities to support children's developmental growth in each of the eight Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) Domains (CA's formative assessment).

The curriculum alignment is monitored during the CDE/EESD on-site program evaluations every three years.

**Support for students with special needs.** SPP programs must comply with ADA as well as California's Unruh Civil Rights Act, California Civil Code Section 51 which is much more expansive than the ADA and offers broader protection for children with special needs. The Preschool Program Guidelines provide clear definitions and resources on early childhood inclusive practice including the Least Restrictive Environment Resources Project operated by WestEd for CDE.

In 2013-2014, one percent of the children enrolled in SPP received special education services.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The California English Language Development Standards (ELD) describe what children typically demonstrate at three different levels of English-language development from Kindergarten through grade 12. The California Preschool Program Guidelines includes two chapters on supporting DLLs. California is one of only 6 states that requires DLL children to be assessed in their home language and one of only 9 that provides additional resources to programs of DLL children.

Professional development or coaching is provided for teachers and there are several resources for teachers to utilize including translators or bilingual staff for children who do not speak English.

DRDP addresses cultural and linguistic responsiveness by having teachers observe and document children's behavior in both the home language and English to obtain a more accurate profile of the children's knowledge and skills across developmental domains and four measures were developed for use with preschool age children and focus on the English-language development (ELD) of children whose home language is not English. These measures allow SPP teachers to observe and track children's progress in reaching the competencies described in the preschool ELD foundations. English learners may demonstrate their competence in any of the DRDP measures using their home language or English.

The CDE has not adopted or recommended a formal process or instrument to determine who is a preschool English language learner. Bilingual and monolingual, non-English classes are permitted in SPP.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS and ECERS observations are components required within QRIS and conducted at the local level. For the programs participating in QRIS, publicizing site quality ratings has begun to happen at the individual participating site level, if they so choose. For example, in 2014, Fresno made ratings public via a searchable website linked to their local resource and referral agency. At the state level, work on publicizing ratings will continue and the RTT-ELC implementation team will develop a guidance document to support this work in 2015.

**Child assessments.** DRDP is a formative assessment instrument developed by the California Department of Education for young children and their families to be used to inform instruction and program development. The DRDP aligns with the Foundations and is administered in natural settings through teacher observations, family observations, and examples of children's work. Ongoing documentation of children's knowledge and skills in everyday environments is a recommended practice for early childhood assessment.

DRDP assessment results for individual children and classrooms are used by the teachers, family members, and program administrators to improve the experience of each child in their care and the quality of the program. This system enables programs to implement quality improvement activities for the benefit of participants. The Desired Results Training and Technical Assistance Project, administered by WestEd's Center for Child and Family Studies, provides training and technical assistance to SSP. CDE's website provides information on DRDP.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The CDE and CEESD Desired Results (DR) system is designed to improve the quality of programs and services provided to SPP students. Desired Results are defined as conditions of well-being for children and families on six Desired Results—four for children and two for their families. The DR system consists of the following components: DRDP; Parent Survey, ECERS-R; and Program Self Evaluation. The ECERS-R are required for yearly program self-evaluation and used for the reviews conducted CDE/EESD program staff every three years. The staff is assigned regionally to programs. Their caseloads are not able to be reported.

As of the 2010-2011 school year, California moved from a regularly scheduled visit policy, to a new licensing monitoring schedule determined based upon program information (consultant communication with agency staff, audit information, fiscal information, other concerns), which result in only 'as-needed' site visits.

Senate Bill 858 (Chapter 32, Statutes of 2014) authorizes \$50 million of Proposition 98 funds for QRIS Block Grant for the support of QRIS in SPP. The QRIS Block Grant funds are separate from the RTT-ELC funds. Participation is voluntary, but strongly encouraged. In the 2012-2013 school year, 177 (5.66 percent) SPP programs were in QRIS and in the 2013-2014 school year, 463 (14.81 percent) SPP programs were enrolled. In 2014-2015 the number increased again to 818 SPP programs or 26.2 percent.

Agencies receiving CPP funds are required to submit agency-wide program and fiscal audits each year and data on children and families served each month. Agencies are responsible for prioritizing program improvement areas.

There has not been a formal, third-party evaluation of SPP.

**Professional development.** Teachers are required to complete 105 clock hours per 5 years for their Child Development Permit. Teachers are required to formulate one or more professional growth goals, to write those goals on the Professional Growth Plan and Record form, and to discuss those goals with your professional growth

advisor before beginning professional growth activities. Teachers may select their own professional growth advisor who must meet certain requirements as outlined in the Child Development Permit Professional Growth Manual. Once complete, a Professional Growth Plan and Record form is then submitted.

The California Early Childhood Mentor Program provides resources and support to aspiring and experienced teachers and administrators in programs serving children birth to five and before- and after-school programs. Through Federal and local funding the Mentor Program provides stipends and professional development support to SPP teachers. It is open to all SPP contractors, but utilized on a voluntary basis. Another resource that is available to SPP contractors is CSPIN, previously described.

There are numerous conferences and trainings throughout the state that SPP teachers may choose to attend.

**Integrated system.** California's Quality Continuum Framework, the basis for the QRIS, connects child development and school readiness (Foundations, Framework, DRDP), teachers and teachings (CDE competencies, professional growth plans, CLASS/ERS), and program environment (ERS, child care licensing, data).

The Competencies Integration Project (CIP), a State Advisory Council (SAC) for Early Learning project, created a rubric for mapping the Competencies to course work and professional development (PD) training activities. Because of the breadth of these competencies, the CIP also created a web-based Mapping Tool to assist faculty and PD providers in mapping their learning objectives to specific competencies. Forty-two community colleges, 11 California State Universities and 19 ECE professional development organizations have utilized the tool. From 2013 to December of 2014, there has been an increase of 292 mapped courses which brings the total number of mapped courses to 491. Likewise, from 2013-2014, there has been an increase of 44 trainings that have been mapped with the Competencies via the web-based Mapping Tool which brings the total number of mapped trainings to 63.

California's workforce Competencies (initiated in 2008 and completed in 2011) are aligned with the Foundations and guide professional development and related quality improvement activities. The Competencies serve four interrelated purposes: 1) providing structure for workforce development, 2) informing Higher Education course of study, 3) guiding credentialing efforts, and 4) defining educator skills, knowledge and dispositions.

The Foundations, Frameworks, and the DRDP provide the detail and a developmental continuum to assist quality programs prepare children for transitional kindergarten and their ability to be successful in grades K-3. The Foundations and the DRDP are used together to plan the environment, play, learning activities, and instruction to meet the needs of the children and provide high-quality experiences. The environment and materials can then be assessed using the ECERS-R. Strategies for using the ERS are included in Guidelines for Operating Preschool Programs.

## **Key Contacts**

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## **Resources**

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## Colorado

### Colorado Preschool Program

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) was launched in 1988 in an effort to target 3- and 4-year-olds in need of language development with the goal of lowering dropout rates and reducing dependence on public assistance. In 1992, CPP became a permanent program, but expanded its target population to all children who lack overall school readiness due to family risk factors. Risk factors for eligibility are defined in statute, including eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, being in foster care, a family history of abuse or neglect, homelessness, low parental education levels, parental substance abuse, or having a teen parent, as well as locally determined risk factors. Four-year-olds must meet at least one risk factor to enroll in CPP, while 3-year-olds must have a minimum of three risk factors. In the 2014-2015 school year, 27,017 children attended CPP.

During the 2013 legislative session, the Colorado legislature created a new type of CPP slot known as the Early Childhood At-Risk Enhancement or ECARE slot. The intention of this new approach was to allow school districts more flexibility. ECARE slots may be used to fund half-day pre-K, full-day pre-K, or full-day Kindergarten. School districts may change the usage of their allotted ECARE slots from year-to-year based on the needs of their early childhood population.

CPP funding is determined through the Colorado school finance formula with preschoolers receiving half the amount of students in grades 1 through 12. These funds are distributed directly to public schools that are given a predetermined number of half-day slots to serve eligible children. Two types of slots can be allocated to districts: CPP slots which can be used to serve eligible pre-K students and ECARE slots which can be used to serve pre-K students or to provide full-day opportunities for eligible kindergarteners. Two half-day slots can be combined to create full-day opportunities for pre-K children with very high needs.

Schools may subcontract with private child care centers, Head Start, or other community-based or public agencies. The Charter School Institute also participates in the Colorado Preschool Program as a direct recipient of funds. Funding is awarded competitively with priority given to districts not currently participating in CPP. CPP may use additional funding sources, such as federal Head Start money, to extend the program day, supplement services, or provide wraparound care.

CPP meets six of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, missing the benchmarks for teacher and assistant teacher degree; maximum class size; the requirement of screening, referral, and support services; and only children who are in the program for more than 4 hours per day must be offered a meal.

Colorado was one of 5 states funded in the second round of federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge in 2012. The \$29.9 million grant is being used to fund activities designed to improve the quality of pre-K and Kindergarten with its QRIS system, [Colorado Shines](#).

In K-12 education, Colorado ranks 40<sup>th</sup> for education spending, \$8,647 per pupil in 2013. Nevertheless, Colorado's graduation rate is above average at 76.9 percent and NAEP test scores are above the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

grades. In 2012-2013, 50 percent of fourth graders in Colorado scored at or above proficient on the NAEP math test, sixth highest in the nation. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions Colorado ranked 35<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or “weak.”

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 76.8 percent of age-eligible children in Colorado were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 59.7 percent are attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Colorado Preschool Program meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	–	○	–	ND	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Hickenlooper (D) has been seen as a strong supporter of pre-K. Prior to being Governor, he was Mayor of Denver, which has a strong pre-K program. During his 2010 gubernatorial campaign, he urged more funding for public schools citing Colorado’s relatively small education budget. "Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming all spend more per pupil than Colorado. In fact only two neighboring states (Arizona and Utah) spend less on education than we do." The Future School Finance Act ([Act 248](#), 2013) proposed changes to school funding that would bolster budgets for early education programs, struggling school districts and programs that help at-risk youth. This legislation requires \$925 million in additional taxes that must be approved by a statewide ballot measure by 2017.

[SB 13-236](#) (2013) added 3,200 additional slots to the CPP annually starting in FY 2013-14. This measure also allows school districts to use preschool funding to provide full-day kindergarten as needed. [HB 14-1298](#) (2014) increased the number of ECARE slots in CPP by 5,000, once again a school district or a charter school may choose to serve a child in half-day or full-day preschool, or in full-day kindergarten. However, actual enrollment increases have been much smaller than these numbers would suggest. The [Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act](#) (the READ Act), passed by the Colorado Legislature in 2012, focuses on early literacy development for all students and especially for students at risk for not achieving third grade reading proficiency. The READ Act focuses on kindergarten through third grade (K-3) literacy development, literacy assessment and individual READ plans for students identified with a Significant Reading Deficiency. Other components of the Colorado READ Act include a

competitive Early Literacy Grant that is funded every three years. The current cycle of the grant is from 2013-2016. During the first year of the grant, 30 schools participated.

From 2010-2012, the state enacted consecutive budget cuts, including a reduction in the funding available for K–12 students. State funding for CPP, tied to Colorado’s funding for K-12, increased in 2013-2014 to \$47.7 million to a current level over \$54 million (FY15), a 10 percent increase. These figures do not include contributions from local sources, which are required by the school finance formula.

During the 2015 legislative session, Colorado’s state legislature passed several bipartisan child care bills aimed at promoting family self-sufficiency and improving the school readiness opportunities for young children, with funds totaling more than \$20 million.

In 1992, Colorado voters approved the Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR), a constitutional amendment designed to restrain growth in government. It is viewed as the most restrictive tax and spending limitation in the country. State spending in Colorado is only allowed to increase at the rate of population growth plus inflation and any revenue collected in excess of TABOR’s revenue limits must be refunded to the taxpayers. It is estimated that Colorado taxpayers will receive an estimated \$154 million tax refund in 2016, even as this fiscal year’s state budget faces a potential \$220 million deficit. This could have serious implications for school funding, including CPP. The state’s budget limitations seemingly limit any major progress and raise questions about the political will broadly in the state for change.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** CPP is administered through the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness (Nancie Linville, Unit Supervisor) which is housed in the Teaching and Learning Unit (Melissa Colman, Exec. Dir.) under the Achievement and Strategy Division, one of six divisions within the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Elliott Asp is the Interim Commissioner for Education.

CPP is led by Dr. Cathrine Aasen Floyd (Program Director) with support from Elizabeth Schroeder (Program and Data Support). Dr. Aasen Floyd has been in the education field for 26 years and earned her Ph.D. in Ed Leadership and Policy Studies. The CPP office also includes a staff of five Regional Support Specialists who offer technical assistance to CPP programs, and 10 Results Matter staff paid for with state and RTT-ELC funds. Results Matter is Colorado’s system for measuring information on families and child outcomes (birth to age 5) in early childhood programs.

Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation (Susan Steele, Exec. Dir.) has been funding the Buell Early Childhood Leadership Certificate (Dr. Aasen Floyd is a graduate) and supports early childhood education and development issues in Colorado. Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) (Gloria Higgins, President) is made up of top business leaders from around Colorado committed to increasing the public and private investments in the entire early childhood sector, not just CPP. Colorado Children’s Campaign (Bill Jaeger, VP, Early Childhood Initiatives) advocates for “expanded access to quality early childhood programs and continued improvements in program alignment and efficiency,” specifically, focusing on system building efforts, increasing access to full-day pre-K and K, and promoting quality across the early childhood sector. These two partners along with Clayton Early Learning form Colorado’s Alliance for Early Success which is focused on building Colorado’s capacity to expand pre-K, increasing family supports, addressing behavioral health issues in young children, and completing the implementation of legislative reforms to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** CPP teachers are not required to hold a Colorado Department of Education (CDE)



educator license but must meet Colorado DHS requirements for center-based staff. In addition, the CPP Act requires that teachers provide evidence that they have received education credits in the field of early childhood. This can be done in the form of a portfolio that demonstrates knowledge of early childhood development, developmentally appropriate practice, multicultural education, and parent partnerships. If the teacher cannot demonstrate the specified skills, then s/he must be supervised by someone who can and progress must be part of a staff development plan.

All classrooms that include CPP-funded children must be committed to using the Colorado Quality Standards as indicators of developmentally appropriate practice in a high quality program. These standards recommend that lead teachers should have at least a Child Care Professional Credential (CCP), Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or an associate degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development. If these credentials cannot be met, than a training plan and timeline, both individualized and program-wide, should be developed.

Colorado does not require salary parity for CPP lead or assistant teachers in public school or nonpublic school settings to K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Legislation mandates that preschool classrooms with children who are receiving CPP funds are allowed to have a maximum group size of 16 children with two teachers or one teacher per 8 children. There are no waivers to override group size or ratio limits for CPP.

**Learning time.** The CPP Act requires 360 contact hours a year or approximately 10 hours per week. Classes can be four half-days or the equivalent per week. The fifth half-day or equivalent can be used for home visits, staff development, or planning. It is also recommended that children do not attend a single day per week for an extended-day schedule of 10 hours or more in order to meet the contact hour requirement for CPP.

CPP is managed by local school districts and their preschool advisory councils. Each participating school district is given a predetermined number of half-day slots to serve eligible children. Two types of slots can be allocated to districts: CPP slots which can be used to serve eligible preschoolers and ECARE slots which can be used to serve preschoolers or to provide full-day opportunities for eligible kindergarteners. Two half-day slots can be combined to create full-day opportunities for preschool children with very high needs.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As previously noted, CPP classrooms must limit class size to a maximum of 16 children with an adult-child ratio of one to eight.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Originally established in 2007, the Colorado Building Blocks for Early Development and Learning was revised in 2011 to align with the Colorado P-12 Academic Standards. Building Blocks was replaced by the Colorado Early Learning & Development Guidelines (ELDG) in January 2013. The ELDG address all developmental and academic fields, are inclusive of all children ages birth to 8 years, and align with the Colorado P-12 Academic Standards, which include preschool and have incorporated the Common Core State Standards.

SE2, Inc. was awarded a contract to develop a website for the ELDG. The website was launched in 2014 and includes an online tool to allow partners to customize the flyers and a tool where site visitors can share their stories about the guidelines are being utilized as a resource across the state.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The Colorado Quality Standards provide guidance for curriculum selection and a matrix to evaluate the degree to which the children are actively involved in the learning process and the variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials are available.



Curriculum selection and implementation is conducted at the local level. The State's role in this process occurs with the CPP Regional Support Specialists who work at the district, program, or classroom level on curriculum selection, training, or coaching.

**Support for students with special needs.** Under the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), school districts are required to provide a preschool program for young children with disabilities. States are mandated to provide a free and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities ages three to 21.

The Results Matter program is used by CDE for collecting valid and reliable information as needed to demonstrate the growth children with disabilities are making. Inclusionary practices are strongly encouraged in CPP and increased funding levels have been tied to programs that are being more inclusive of children with special needs. The Exception Student Services Unit within CDE has been conducting joint trainings and webinars with the Teaching and Learning Unit where CPP is housed.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** There are not any state policies that support CPP children and families who do not speak English as their primary language. DLL is considered an eligibility criterion for enrollment in CPP. Training opportunities are available but not required or coordinated through the CPP state office.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Colorado Shines requires an average ECERS total score of 5.75 or higher, with no classrooms below 5.0 in order to read the highest level of quality. The number of CPP programs who have reached this level in Colorado Shines is not available. In addition, the state does not collect ECERS or CLASS scores.

**Child assessments.** All programs serving children funded through CPP use formative assessment to monitor progress and illustrate growth between fall and spring in key areas of learning and development. The [Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids \(CAP4K\)](#) legislation (2008) mandates that every child in CPP have an Individual School Readiness (ISR) plan. The ISR is informed by ongoing assessment of a child's progress in developmental and academic domains. Child progress monitoring occurs through required participation in TS GOLD, Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP-K), or Riverside Early Assessment of Learning (REAL).

The state board considers and only approves child assessments that are research-based, recognized nationwide as reliable instruments for measuring school readiness, and suitable for determining the instruction and interventions students need to improve his/her readiness to succeed in school. This information is used to inform individualized instructional planning at the classroom level, to provide aggregate data to inform the annual CPP Legislative Report which authorizes CDE to request from districts the information and data necessary to report to the Legislature the results of the CPP program, and informs program evaluation and continuous improvement efforts. The results of this assessment cannot be used to deny a student progression to kindergarten or first grade.

Building capacity in the use and successful implementation of TS GOLD was a primary focus of Results Matter in 2014. In addition, RTT-ELC funds are being used to implement a multi-year implementation of TS GOLD.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** CDE has been documenting longitudinal academic outcomes for a cohort of children participating in CPP since 2003-04 using annual CSAP/TCAP results. [Results](#)

reported to the Legislature in 2015 demonstrate that graduates of CPP have a lasting benefit from the program compared to other at-risk children who did not participate in CPP, including CPP children have a reduced need for retention by as much as one-third in first grade and a lower rate in subsequent grades and consistently higher proficiency rates in reading, writing and math from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades.

In the 2008-2009 school year, almost 40,000 children across a range of early childhood programs in Colorado participated in Results Matter. Through assessment data, the state found that by the spring of 2009, children participating in CPP had achieved a greater rate of growth than children paying tuition to attend preschool, thus narrowing the gap between the groups by the time they entered kindergarten.

CPP is required to annually report preschool results to the Colorado General Assembly. These reports provide program and CPP family demographics; any implementation changes, local impact of the program, and child developmental growth and long-term outcomes and impact.

CPP statute requires district advisory councils to make a minimum of two on-site visits annually to each nonpublic school CPP classroom to monitor overall program compliance and make recommendations for any needed improvements. They are also required to develop a district preschool program evaluation component specific to the district preschool program involved, develop a training program for district preschool program staff using all available community resources, recommend to the board of education a plan for the annual evaluation of the district preschool program, and provide any other appropriate assistance to the school district in the implementation of the district preschool program.

CPP program data collected by CDE becomes part of Results Matter that was used in the 2013-2014 school year to evaluate CPP for program impact and child outcomes. Approximately 47,000 children during the 2013-2014 school year, including 19,538 CPP participants reported positive, sustained gains for CPP children through eighth grade.

As part of RTT-ELC, CPP programs are offered incentives for enrolling in Colorado Shines. Colorado Shines replaces Qualistar, Colorado's previous QRIS. In 2012-2013, 204 CPP programs (24.8 percent) were enrolled in Colorado Shines. In the following year, the participation of CPP programs increased to 224 programs (30.6 percent).

**Professional development.** In each school district, the funding levels for CPP preschool are one-half of what is provided for a child in grades first through twelfth grades. While the preschool program must offer teacher-pupil contact time at a minimum of 360 hours per year, half-day kindergarten must operate a minimum of 450 hours per year. The 90 hour difference in the program requirements is to enable preschool teachers to have additional time to attend staff training, provide home visits, assess children, and do child planning based on those assessments.

As previously reported, CPP Regional Support Specialists offer support, including coaching, to CPP. There are currently five staff members who serve in this role, each having a caseload of approximately 30 districts. Dosage and contact time by program cannot be reported, however a new data system began in July 2015 which will be able to provide this information in the future.

Through RTT-ELC funds, a Colorado Statewide Coaching Credential and other systems to track coaching credentials are being developed.

**Integrated system.** There are some components of Colorado's early childhood system that have been intentionally aligned. The Results Matter system offers training and support in the use of GOLD. When program participants are able to accumulate points in Colorado Shines, Colorado's QRIS. Colorado's Early Childhood

Credential 2.0 is aligned with the Colorado Shines workforce qualifications quality indicator. The ELDS have been integrated into Higher Education courses. The Early Childhood Competencies Framework is aligned with Colorado's Quality Standards for Teachers and Principals that has been adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education.

## **Key Contacts**

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

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[Race to the top-early learning challenge 2014 annual performance report](#).



## Connecticut

### Connecticut School Readiness Program & Child Day Care Contracts

In an effort to increase access to early education programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, the Connecticut School Readiness Program (SRP) was founded in 1997 under P.A. 97-259, an Act Concerning School Readiness and Child Day Care. Financial support is available to 19 Priority districts defined by legislation and 49 are Competitive School Readiness municipalities. The 19 Priority School Readiness districts are guaranteed funding while competitive grants are available to other municipalities that have one or more schools in which 40 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or are one of the communities identified within the 50 lowest wealth towns in the state. All families, regardless of income levels, can apply for School Readiness spaces in Competitive and Priority municipalities. However, 60 percent of children enrolled in each municipality must meet the income guideline of at or below 75 percent of state median income (SMI).

For Priority districts and Competitive School Readiness municipalities, the funding level is based on previous year's slot capacity and local requests for proposals addressing ability to increase capacity. The appropriation is set by the state. Both Priority and Competitive School Readiness use the same funding formula as of FY15. The funding level is based on previous year's space capacity and local requests for proposals addressing ability to increase capacity. FY2015 state funding has increased to \$101.8 million from \$82.7 million the previous year. In 2014-2015, 12,098 children participated in SRP.

While only municipalities, towns, and Regional Education Service Centers receive funding directly, they may contract with public schools, Head Start agencies, private child care centers, and faith-based settings.

Child Day Care Contracts (CDCC) for children birth to age 12 with household incomes below 75 percent of the state median income are available through the OEC. In the 2014-2015 school year, 2,601 preschool-age children were served through CDCC. In previous years fees for this service were re-determined every six months, which did not meet the NIEER definition of a state-funded preschool program, therefore excluding it from the Yearbook. In 2014-2015, the policy changed and there is an annual recalculation of fees and a provision that allows families that are over income to remain enrolled.

In 2014, Connecticut was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$12.5 million. The federal Head Start program was also supported during the 2013-2014 program year with state funding totaling \$5,585,093 provided through three grants: Services, Enhancements, and Links. These funds were used in many aspects, including to provide 380 supplementary spaces to 3- and 4-year-olds and to expand the Head Start program day and year. The funds also support quality improvements, including establishing collaborative learning opportunities for early childhood education and care providers from other agencies, collaborating with kindergarten to focus on executive function, and purchasing additional materials.

SRP and CDCC meet six of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, both miss the benchmarks for teacher and assistant teacher degrees. SRP also misses two others by only requiring nine clock hours of teacher in-service a

year; programs are only required to serve one snack to children who attend fewer than 5 hours per day. CDCC misses the screenings/referrals and monitoring benchmark.

In K-12 education, Connecticut spent \$16,631 per pupil in 2012, which ranked it fifth highest in the nation. Connecticut’s graduation rate is above average at 85.5 percent and NAEP test scores are above the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions ranked Connecticut 17th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second of five tiers. The teacher unions, the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), and AFT Connecticut, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, have repeatedly brought the "Project Opening Doors" program to court for offering financial incentives for passing AP tests to students and teachers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 77.9 percent of age-eligible children in Connecticut were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013. In the kindergarten enrollment by school districts [report](#) of 2014-2015, approximately 94 percent of Connecticut kindergarteners were enrolled in a full-day program that provides 900 hours of actual schoolwork for a minimum of 180 days.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Connecticut School Readiness Program meets **five** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others; the Connecticut Child Day Care Contracts meets **five** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

### School Readiness Program

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	–	○	–	ND	–	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

### Child Day Care Contracts

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	●	●	●	–	○	–	ND	–	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Dan Malloy (D) is seen as supportive of pre-K efforts. In his [2015 State of the State address](#) he announced, *“We’ve built better schools, raised test scores, made college more affordable, and put Connecticut on a path toward universal pre-kindergarten.”* His commitment has been seen in the [Smart Start](#) program that was signed into law last year ([Act 14-41](#), 2014), which is a 10-year initiative designed to expand access to pre-K in public schools and improve and upgrade early childhood classrooms. Senator Beth Bye (D), a co-chair of the legislature’s budget-writing committee has also been a prominent supporter of early childhood initiatives. Funds for the initiative come through a combination of state bonding for capital improvements and resources from the Tobacco Settlement Fund for operations. Smart Start grants are a separate, non-lapsing account within the General Fund. Moneys are expended by OEC to localities that allocate at least half of the available preschool slots to families with incomes up to 75 percent of the median income or to children eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, or those with full-day kindergarten.

Despite the support articulated by elected officials, Connecticut has repeatedly postponed planned expansions of enrollment and requirements for higher program standards. The adequacy of preschool provision by the state is currently being contested as part of a constitutional challenge to the state’s education system.

[Act 14-22](#) (2014) requires the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with OEC, to maximize the enrollment of eligible pre-K children who are in the care and custody of the state as well as report to the Legislature on the enrollment status of these children. [Act 15-135](#)(2015) pushed the date in CPP teacher requirements from July 2015 to July 2017 and requires OEC to develop a plan regarding the implementation of the staff qualifications requirements for staff members of early childhood education programs including CPP. [Act 15-96](#) (2015) prohibits out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in preschool and grades kindergarten to two unless a hearing determines that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate.

State funding for SRP increased from \$82,742,716 in 2013-2014 to \$101,847,578 in 2014-2015. However, the Governor declined to fund the planned expansion of pre-K for 2015-2016 citing budgetary problems. Expansion also has been limited by school district perception that state grants cover too little of the cost to persuade them to participate. State funding for all pre-K efforts totaled \$119 million in 2014-2015.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** [Act 14-39](#) (2014) established the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and transferred duties, roles, and responsibilities of early care and education from various state departments to the OEC, including administration of the CCDF and administrative authority over SRP, rather than the State Department of Education. OEC operates under the direction of the Commissioner of Early Childhood, Dr. Myra Jones-Taylor. Dr. Jones-Taylor is also the Co-Chair of the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet and was recently selected to join the 2015 class of Aspen Institute Ascend Fellows.

The Division of Early Care and Education (Harriet Feldlaufer, Director) is made up of four units: Workforce Development, Program Improvement and Support, Standards and Assessment, and Grants and Subsidies. The Division of Early Care and Education has a staff of 16, plus 104 contractors. Prior to coming to OEC, Ms. Feldlaufer worked for 25 years in the CT Department of Education in professional development, early childhood education,

family involvement, and school improvement. The SRP is within the Grants and Subsidies unit and led by Gerri Rowell, School Readiness Program Manager.

The OEC hosted six public forums across the state in July and August 2015 to seek input from the public on its draft strategic plan framework. Over 150 stakeholders attended and had an opportunity to complete an online survey. A new strategic plan is being developed and the public will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan in 2016.

The Grossman Family Foundation (Linda Franciscovich, Exec. Dir.) has supported pre-K issues, particularly in workforce development. [William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund's](#) 2010-2015 strategies and activities include early childhood system building efforts, parent education, P-3 alignment, and making grants for advocacy to address quality improvement and workforce development that promote voluntary preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds.

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (Merrill Gay, Exec. Dir.) is a statewide membership and advocacy organization committed to improving outcomes in the areas of learning, health, safety, and economic security, for children ages birth to eight. The policy platform for 2015 included funding for early childhood programs and workforce compensation.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Lead teachers in public and nonpublic schools under the School Readiness grant must have at least a CDA and 12 early childhood credits. Staff-qualifications for all state-funded early childhood programs, including SRP, were increased in July 2011, with a phase-in schedule over the next few years. By 2017, 50 percent of lead teachers must hold a BA and 50 percent must hold an AA specific to early childhood. By 2020, 100 percent of lead teachers must hold a BA.

Lead teachers and assistant teachers in SRP in either public school settings or nonpublic settings are not paid on par with district salary schedules.

**Adult-child ratios.** Both programs are encouraged to keep the class size to 18, however the state requires a maximum class size of 20 and a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

**Learning time.** All CDCC programs must operate for at least 10 hours per day. SRP works to accommodate a diverse set of family situations, and offers extended-day spaces in addition to school- and part-day spaces. There are three types of slots, including full-day (10 hours)/full-year (50 weeks/year), school day (6 hours)/school-year (180 days/year), and part-day (2.5 to 5.5 hours)/school-year (180 to 250 days/year). Extended-day provides hours, days, and weeks of a non-SRP program to extend the program to meet full-day, full-year requirements. All programs operate 5 days per week. In 2014-2015, more than two-thirds of the 12,098 children attended the extended-day option.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Both SRP and CDCC classrooms have a lead teacher and an assistant. At times itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) were revised and adopted in 2013. The CT ELDS address all developmental and academic fields, are inclusive of all



children from birth to 5 years, and align with the Common Core State Standards.

OEC's [website](#) provides a variety of CT ELDS resources including curriculum and instruction support materials, assessment alignments such as the [Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework \(CT PAF\)](#), principal guides, and video links.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Programs may either purchase or design a curriculum and assessment that aligns with the CT ELDS and CT PAF. However, there must be evidence in the planning documents and classroom implementation that the CT ELDS standards use are intentionally planned, implemented, observed, and assessed.

Guidance is provided to assist programs through technical assistance from the local Regional Education Service Center (RESC) and independent coaches and consultants. Documents and other resources are also listed on OEC's website.

**Support for students with special needs.** In 2014-2015, less than 6 percent of children had an IEP/IFSP. The Connecticut General Statutes require that children with disabilities are integrated into any program, including SRP, that is available to children who are not disabled. In order to support programs, two documents have been developed that outline policies and procedures to support children with special needs: [School Readiness Spaces for Children with an IEP](#) and [Americans with Disabilities ACT \(ADA\) Requirements](#). Teachers are also required to complete an annual 3-or-more-hour training on working with children with disabilities. SRP teachers are encouraged to be involved with development of IEPs or be part of follow-up discussions so that they can work in unison with children receiving outside special need services.

The CT Statutes ([C.G.S. Section 10-16o \(9\)](#)) requires that the SRP "Assure that children with disabilities are integrated into programs available to children who are not disabled." A policy [memo](#) has been developed to guide the SRP grantees on developing their local policies on SRP spaces for children with IEPs.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** State policy does not regulate services for DLL/ELL students. It is strongly suggested that programs provide a staff member or volunteer who speaks the child's home language. A [supplement framework](#) to the CT ELDS was developed to "raise awareness of the typical stages of acquiring a second language" to support the language and development of these children. In addition, the CT ELDS and training guides have been translated into Spanish. Nine percent of children in grades K-2 were identified as ELL. In 2012, a [Data Bulletin](#) highlighted ELL data from the 2011-2012 school year for the state.

### **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** All SRP and CDCC non-Head Start programs must achieve NAEYC accreditation by the third anniversary of the first day children attend the program. In order to help prepare programs that are not accredited, annual ECERS self-assessments are required. The scores themselves are not turned into OEC, but the name of the consultant who conducted the assessment and the date completed. Because ECERS scores are not available for review, and CLASS use is not required by OEC, we could not determine the extent to which high quality teaching takes place in SRP or CDCC.

**Child assessments.** Programs may use any curriculum and assessment that is aligned with the CT ELDS and CT PAF that address learning standards and outcomes. The CT PAF is a curriculum-embedded tool for assessing children in



their classrooms. A web-based platform managed by an outside company has been developed for collecting and reporting child, class, and program assessment information. Programs can purchase this program.

There is no state policy regarding how districts must use pre-K assessment data. Districts are known to use these data to guide teacher training, provide professional development or technical assistance, to make decisions regarding a children's enrollment in kindergarten, make adjustments to curricula, and track child and program level outcomes over time.

Due to the recent completion of the CT ELDS, the process of developing a new child assessment to replace CT PAF has just begun.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** As previously noted, the state requires that all programs after three years of serving children through SRP or CDCC must achieve NAEYC accreditation or be approved by the Head Start system. If a program does not maintain NAEYC accreditation it must notify OEC within 72 hours; submit, within one month, a detailed program improvement action plan to the OEC Program Manager that addresses the issues identified, the persons responsible, and the strategies that will be used to ensure adherence to the timelines established by NAEYC for re-submission of materials; and immediately arrange a meeting with the OEC Program Manager(s) to discuss the circumstances and continued eligibility for state funding. If these steps are not followed the SRP would risk removal of state funds.

All SRP programs are evaluated annually through the CT School Readiness Preschool Program Evaluation System (CSRPPES), which includes ECERS for specified programs. This information is used by the state to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, to identify programs for corrective action or sanctions, to make funding decisions about programs or grantees, to make adjustments to curricula, to provide technical assistance and/or mentoring, to make changes to state policies regarding SRP, and to provide feedback to parents.

CDCC programs are only required to be licensed.

No formal, third-party evaluation of SRP or CDCC has been completed. However, Connecticut currently is conducting a regression discontinuity study.

**Professional development.** SRP Teachers must complete at least 12 hours of required training per year for CT licensing and NAEYC. In addition, all SRP staff must complete two 3-hour annual trainings in early childhood education and one 3-or-more-hour annual training in serving children with disabilities. They must also document training in emerging literacy and in diversity in the classroom. Most centers are licensed by the Department of Public Health, which requires annual training in medical administration, First Aid, and nutrition. Program administrators are encouraged to provide at least one hour a day for teaching staff to engage in the planning process of developing learning experience plans.

To help pay for coaching and other quality enhancements, SRP grantees, through their local School Readiness Council, can apply for Quality Enhancement funds. The use of the funds and the budgets are approved by OEC. Funds are allotted based on student enrollment within the municipality, and range from \$3,900 to \$135,000 per year in 2014-2015. Some programs hire consultants to do specific trainings and others hire coaches or mentors. Coordination does not occur at the state level and data as to how the funds are used are not available.

CDCC requires professional development (PD) for staff that totals 1% of the total annual hours worked. Content may include, but is not limited to, early childhood education and child development, licensing and regulations, health issues, nutrition, first aid, social services, child abuse laws, and programming for children with disabilities or

special health care needs. The programs are required to develop, implement, and maintain a written PD plan, and to document and maintain the PD plan for each program staff member and make it available for review.

Connecticut institutes of higher education are forming or reviewing early childhood degree programs, including the recently developed Early Childhood Teacher Credential that satisfies requirements to teach in School Readiness and State Supplemental Head Start programs. Scholarship money is offered for degree programs, as degree requirements for lead teachers are gradually increasing.

Act 15-227 (2015) increased the amount unexpended school readiness grant funds may be used to provide professional development for early childhood care and education program providers as well as increases financial assistance for cost of higher education to \$10,000 per staff member per year.

Another PD resource for SRP programs is the State Education Resource Center (SERC), which is primarily funded by the CDE. SERC provides “professional development and information dissemination in the latest research and best practices to educators, service providers, and families throughout the state, as well as job-embedded technical assistance and training within schools, programs, and districts.” Programs complete an application form in order to access these services.

Connecticut's Accreditation Facilitation Project (AFP) supports programs including SRP through the NAEYC accreditation process. Workshops, materials, and study groups are available, as well as Individualized Intensive support, which includes on-site technical assistance and support by an AFP facilitator.

**Integrated system.** The OEC was established in 2013 to coordinate and improve the various early childhood programs and components in the state to create a cohesive high-quality early childhood system. The organization of the Early Care and Education Division naturally leads to integration of critical system components including workforce, standards, quality, and assessment.

As previously described, SRP may use any curriculum and assessment that is aligned with the CT ELDS and CT PAF. The CT PAF is in the process of being revised to ensure better alignment with the CT ELDS. In early 2016 there are plans to have research and focus groups, followed by instrument development, with a tentative timeline for completing the tool in spring 2017. This will be followed by expert review of the instrument and then a pilot through 2017-2018 with further research and review.

The first phase of the Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) is preparing to launch for publicly funded early care and education programs across the state. To prepare for the launch, the OEC and the CDE held a series of web-based trainings as well as hands-on, computer-based trainings. The trainings were a success, with 132 attendees during the web-based trainings and 119 attendees in the hands-on trainings.

All OEC funded programs, including School Readiness, Child Day Care contracts, State Head Start, Smart Start and Preschool Development Grant, are the primary users for this first phase of ECIS with data collection about children enrolled in publicly funded spaces. Data is stored in the ECIS's secure and confidential database. Unique State Assigned Student Identification (SASID) numbers are assigned in the ECIS through the SDE SASID Manager. The SASID Manager was further enhanced as part of ECIS, allowing access to the same tool used by school districts for unique identification numbers to publicly funded community-based early care and education providers.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

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<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=320740>

Connecticut State Department of Education. (2014). [A report of school readiness need and the costs to serve all 3- and 4-year-old children in 19 priority school districts](#).

<http://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/earlycare/sr/sroverview.pdf>



## Delaware

### Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP)

Delaware's Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) started in 1994, providing early childhood services for Head-Start eligible 3- and 4-year-olds. The program was modeled after the Head Start program and requires that participating programs follow Head Start Performance Standards. Community Needs Assessment Data determine which programs receive ECAP grants, which are available to for-profit child care centers, Head Start agencies, public schools, and private and faith-based centers.

In the 2014-2015 school year, 7.5 percent of the state's 4-year-olds were enrolled in the pre-K program. Ten percent of enrollment slots are reserved for children with disabilities, while the remainder of children must live in families whose income is at or below 100 percent of the FPL. After the Head Start Reauthorization Act was enabled in 2007, Delaware adjusted its eligibility requirement to include children living in households with incomes at 100 to 130 percent of the FPL, making up 35 percent of the program's funded enrollment. Total state funding for pre-K was \$5.9 million during 2014-2015, with a per-child amount of \$7,100 from the state. Delaware won the first round of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants in 2011, with a \$50 million multi-year award to the early childhood program.

Delaware's ECAP program earned 8 out of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2014-2015 school year. Delaware does not require teachers to have a Bachelor's degree and does not require assistant teachers to have a CDA or equivalent.

In 2013, Delaware's current spending per pupil in K-12 ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation at \$13,886. In 2015, Delaware scored just below the national average in math in both grades 4 and 8, and in reading in grade 8, but scored above the national average in grade 4 reading on the *NAEP National Report Card*. The state has a graduation rate just below the national average at 80 percent, which is lower than all of Delaware's neighboring states. Delaware's teachers union ranked 19<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "strong," in a 2012 Fordham University [study](#). The state requires districts to offer a full-day kindergarten program. The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 74 percent percent of age-eligible children in Delaware were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 85 percent attended full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Delaware's ECAP program has **five** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **six** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	○	–	●	–	●	●	○	○	○	ND	●	○	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Although Delaware has not recently passed or proposed much new legislation with regard to early childhood services and systems, Governor Jack Markell (D) is supportive of early childhood efforts, specifically the state’s highly rated QRIS program “Stars.” The Governor has promised that even though the state’s Race to the Top funding will end this year (the state has approval to continuing spending these funds into 2017), he will look deeply into the issue of funding early childhood in the budget for fiscal year 2016. Not much additional funding has been added since the state agreed to a \$22 million investment in 2011 to increase the budget for the Delaware Stars QRIS program. Enrollment in the state pre-K program has actually declined as a percentage of the population over the past decade. Delaware Senator Chris Coons (D) contributed to the Strong Start for America’s Children Act to expand access to high-quality early learning programs for children from birth to age five.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Office of Early Learning (OEL) leads and coordinates the Great Starts Delaware initiative in which three state agencies (Department of Education (DOE); Department of Health and Social Services; and Services for Children, Youth and Their Families) are key partners. This initiative focuses on high-needs children birth to five and includes the state’s QRIS. Susan Perry-Manning, the Executive Director, was formerly the founding Executive Director for the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation. In addition to staff in the Office of Early Learning, preschool education is supported by an administrator for Head Start and ECAP and a 619 coordinator.

The University of Delaware administers and manages the Delaware Stars QRIS program with funding from the DOE through the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) within the University. Staff for the program is also located within Children and Families First, composed of local organizations and serving over 30,000 children and families in need each year.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and Compensation.** Delaware does not require lead teachers to have a BA or any early childhood specialization degrees. Though additional certifications are not required statewide, in some of the school districts ECAP lead teachers are required to have an Early Childhood certificate. Public school assistant teachers are required to take the Para Pro test of basic skills. Delaware pre-K teachers do not have salary parity with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Delaware has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. These numbers meet the Essential Element limit of 22 children per class and are within the adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** Programs are required to provide a minimum of 3.5 hours of services per day. Programs that operate longer than 3.5 hours per day have blended funding from multiple sources to support the additional portion. Some ECAP programs align with school district schedules. Some programs use state subsidy (Purchase of Care) dollars to extend the program day for children.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Delaware’s pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 20 children per classroom with a ratio of 1 adult for every 10 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [Delaware Early Learning Foundations](#) were adopted in 2003 and were last revised in 2010. The Foundations are meant to be a curricular planning guide rather than considered “readiness skills.” Foundations are aligned with Common Core standards and address all domains of learning standards. Advisory group members linked the Foundations with Delaware’s K-12 standards and kindergarten-level expectations.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Delaware maintains a [list](#) of approved curricula that have been reviewed and approved by the state’s Curriculum and Assessment Task Force. The list was developed for the Delaware Stars QRIS program in conjunction with the OEL and DOE to determine the approved list. The list includes 11 curricula that fulfill the requirements for Delaware Stars Standard LC1, which states that programs implement a written comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with the Delaware Early Learning Foundations for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers enrolled. Not all of the curricula on the list can be said to be research-based.

**Support for students with special needs.** State and federal law prohibits discrimination based on special needs or disabilities. According to the *State of Preschool Yearbook*, approximately 5 percent of 4-year-olds are enrolled in special education programs. Delaware uses the Child Outcomes System for children ages 3 to 5 with IEPs, or receiving six consecutive months of service. Children are assessed at least twice a year, once within 60 days of beginning services. Children are rated using the Child Outcomes System 7-point scale for skills and behaviors. Quality programs must meet inclusion policy requirements and make accommodations for families of children with identified disabilities, as well as provide regular written correspondence with families and conferences at least twice annually. Ten percent of ECAP children have special needs.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** According to the US Census, 12.6 percent of people age 5 years and older in Delaware speak a language other than English at home. Early childhood programs in Delaware embrace diversity. Programs must make accommodations for families of children who are dual language learners. A home language survey must be completed at registration, evaluations must be in the child’s primary language, and interpreters must be present at all meetings and conferences should one be necessary. Delaware has a [World Language Immersion Program](#) initiative, but this appears to begin with kindergarten.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Delaware uses a review of program facilities and safety procedures, results of program self-assessments, participation in state QRIS, and review of program records, to measure high quality teaching. ECERS scores are used in programs participating in the Delaware Stars program. ECAP programs must participate in ECERS observations only if they wish to advance from 4 to 5 stars. ECERS or CLASS data on ECAP programs were not available for review.

**Child assessments.** ECAP uses TS GOLD to follow the progress of enrolled children. The TS GOLD formative child assessment data dashboards for the birth-5 early educators and administrators were developed with early educators and program administrators during Year Three of the RTT-ELC grant. After administrators complete the Implementing TS Gold training sponsored by the DIEEC, they are able to receive assessment materials and online access to TS Gold.

**Data-driven decision-making.** Monitoring information is used by the state for a variety of purposes including: to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, to identify programs for corrective action or sanctions, to make funding decisions about programs or grantees; to make adjustments to curricula, to provide program staff with technical assistance and/or mentoring, to make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program, to measure programs on a QRIS, and to provide feedback to parents.

Additionally, the 2007 Head Start/ECAP Outcome Study measured child and family outcomes for 4-year-olds served in Head Start and ECAP programs. The study found that average percentage of skills increased substantially between fall and spring of participation in the program. Delaware is currently working with North Carolina and other state partners to develop a K-3 assessment system, including a KEA.

**Professional development.** All lead teachers working in early childhood must meet the state requirement of 18 hours of in-service professional development per year. The monitoring policies in Delaware allow results of child-level assessments to help identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development.

**Integrated system.** Currently, the system has very limited system-wide data, and involves nearly 30 separate databases on early childhood. This has made it difficult for the state to respond to federal mandates and provide grant performance information on targets and measures. However, the state is looking to improve integration.

Standards and curriculum are aligned through the Delaware Stars program. Stars is administered by the University of Delaware, and includes both ECAP and Head Start programs.

## Key Contacts

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## **Resources**

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[Early Learning Insight: Delaware's Early Childhood Integrated System \(ECIDS\)](#)

Great Start Delaware: <http://www.greatstartsdelaware.com/aboutus.html>

Office of Early Learning [website](#)

[Overview of Head Start/ECAP Outcomes Study: State of Delaware](#)

[2013 Strategic Plan for Early Childhood System](#)





## District of Columbia

### DC Pre-Kindergarten

The District of Columbia has offered funding for prekindergarten programs since the 1960s. In its current form, the Public Pre-Kindergarten program serves students in schools run through community-based organizations (CBOs) and DC Public Schools (DCPS) including charter schools authorized by the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB). The program strives to provide high-quality, universally accessible prekindergarten education services, as stated in the Pre-Kindergarten Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act of 2008 (Pre-K Act).

Following the passage of the Pre-K Act in 2008, the percent of children enrolling in the DC public pre-K program increased from 68 percent to more than 90 percent of 4-year-olds residing in the District. In 2013-2014, enrollment comprised 99 percent of all 4-year-olds in the District and close to 70 percent of all 3-year-olds residing in the District. Since then, the percentage enrolled has declined because of an increase in the numbers of young children in DC. The provision of prekindergarten services to 4-year-olds in the District can be said to be universal and has the highest percentages of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled of all U.S. states and Territories.

Using a per-pupil funding formula, funds are allocated by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Programs receive the same per-pupil amounts regardless of where children are served, though the per-pupil rate differs between 3- and 4-year-olds. The per-pupil funding amount is nearly \$17,000 per pupil, which is very close to the figure for K-12, and includes special education costs. Charter schools also receive a per child facilities allowance alongside the per-pupil amount. There are additional facilities funds available to private providers.

DC meets 8 of NIEER's 10 quality standards benchmarks, lacking a minimum requirement of a CDA for assistant teachers in all settings and failing to meet the criteria for regular monitoring.

DC was unsuccessful in its application for an Early Learning Challenge grant and did not apply for a federal Preschool Development Grant, perhaps because of its universal coverage and relative program quality. However, DC is one of the 11 BUILD Initiative partners, and is part of the federally funded Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) Consortium with 10 other states, led by North Carolina. The consortium is developing an assessment for: informing policy and program improvements in the birth-to-5 system, informing instruction for every child, and helping teachers communicate with families about their children's progress. In 2013-2014, OSSE piloted the KEA, assessing 825 children in 40 classrooms; it will be fully implemented in 2016-2017.

In the broadest terms, DC appears to have the worst educational "outcomes" in the nation. On the 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP, DC scored significantly below every state in the nation except New Mexico for Reading and except Louisiana for Math. DC has the lowest high school graduation rate of any state. Of course, this does not adjust for income and other family background characteristics. Moreover, DC has made large gains on NAEP in recent years. The population of the DC public schools is 14 percent Hispanic and 75 percent African American. Private schools in DC enroll over 20 percent of the population, the highest rate in the country (comparing states). Average teacher salary in DC was over \$70,000 in 2012. In the 2012 Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now teacher union rankings Washington, D.C. ranked 33rd overall for union power and influence, or "weak." The 2015 edition of Education

Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 76.8 percent of age-eligible children in DC were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 85.7 percent were attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). DC meets **nine** of these 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. There is some uncertainty about pay parity, but our best assessment is that most teachers have it. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance (or lack thereof).

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	ND	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

### Rationale

#### Enabling Environment

The District benefits from a particularly strong enabling environment that is institutionalized by the 2008 Act that passed with the strong support of elected officials, state agencies, business leaders, advocates, and philanthropy, all of which have been aligned on delivering high-quality pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old child.

**Political will.** DC has a long history of strong political will favoring pre-K. The Pre-K for All DC Campaign was launched in 2006 with funding from Pre-K Now and the CityBridge Foundation, and built on prior investments by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation working through the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). The Campaign raised additional funding from the DC Early Childhood Collaborative, PNC Bank and other private sources. Pre-K for All DC was housed at NBCDI, which also served as fiscal agent. The Campaign succeeded with the DC Council’s unanimous passage of the 2008 Act that has now fulfilled its enrollment goal. Current Mayor Muriel Bowser (D) has been vocal about supporting quality early childhood education.

In addition to political leadership from the Mayor and City Council, the District continues to have leadership from others, including business, philanthropy, and advocates with a history of effectively working together in the District. Katherine Brittain Bradley is the president of CityBridge Foundation, a nonprofit enterprise located in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Bradley co-founded CityBridge in 1994 with her husband, entrepreneur and magazine publisher David G. Bradley. CityBridge included among its signature projects their Early Years Initiative (2006-2011). NBCDI appointed a new President in September of 2014, Tobeka Green, who had previously been with the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative and Communities in Schools (a dropout prevention initiative working with the DC public schools). Charter schools including KIPP and Apple Tree operating preschool programs in the District have the potential to be strong advocates.

**Compelling visions and strong leadership.** As previously described, DC Public Schools and DC Public Charter School Board each have some responsibility for administering the programs in their respective settings. However, the OSSE maintains administrative control over the program in all sectors.

DC has a new Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning at OSSE, Elizabeth Groginsky. She previously served as Executive Director of the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, Director of Early Childhood Education for United Way Worldwide, and Director of Head Start State Collaboration for the Office of Colorado's Lieutenant Governor. Groginsky also served on the DC State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council, which supports and advocates for policies and practices to ensure a comprehensive early childhood education and development systems from birth on by improving collaboration and coordination among agencies and community partners in the District of Columbia. Given Groginsky's background we expect the use of data for decision making to increase in DC. The Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council is active and has a number of initiatives focused on the use of data to improve quality.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** DC requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. DC has relatively high standards for preparation of assistant teachers (although they miss the NIEER benchmark because passing an exam is allowed in place of the degree) with an AA degree or 48 credits the standard criterion.

Public schools, including charters, are funded by formula at a level that permits salary parity with K-12. The 2008 Act requires that private providers be funded at a level that makes this possible as well, but a 2010 commission suggested that this level of funding was not yet provided. Nevertheless, policy does not require parity and data show large pay gaps with K-12 teachers for both public school and private providers in the DC program.

**Adult-child ratios.** DC has a maximum class size of 16 for 3-year-olds and 20 for 4-year-olds. Mixed age classrooms must adhere to the minimum class size of 16. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** Children attend DC's pre-K program five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 6.5 hours per day (typically 8 AM to 3:15 PM when breakfast is included). Wrap-around services extending beyond the school day are common. This "dosage" of early learning time is consistent with that found in high-quality, effective programs.

**Two adults in the classroom.** A BA-level lead teacher with specialization and an assistant teacher are present at all times. Additional specialists and classroom volunteers may supplement the two adult minimum as is the case with some charter schools (AppleTree has an additional "Teaching Fellow" with at least a BA in each preschool classroom).

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [District of Columbia Kindergarten Readiness Standards](#) are comprehensive and appropriate. In addition, DC has new [Common Core Aligned Early Learning Standards](#) that begin with infants and progress through toddlers to the beginning and end of preschool and to kindergarten exit.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** All DCPS preschool and pre-kindergarten programs are required to implement a comprehensive curriculum that meets the full range of children's developmental needs and is aligned

to the District of Columbia Kindergarten Readiness Standards. The readiness standards cover children ages 3 to 5. Teachers are encouraged to individualize instructional practices based on the interests and skill levels of each child. DC also has invested heavily in the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum, which now operates in 70 percent of all its classrooms. AppleTree's *Every Child Ready* curriculum is used by other providers as well as by AppleTree. Both curricula have some evidence of effectiveness. In addition to these curricula, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Creative Curriculum are identified as some of the "main curricula" being implemented in DCPS. Consistency of content and fidelity of delivery across approaches may create challenges for transitioning to kindergarten.

**Support for students with special needs.** The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), which oversees pre-K, is also the lead agency for IDEA. Early Stages is DCPS's program for children ages 3-5 with suspected and/or identified developmental delays and disabilities. DC has made inclusion a priority and preschool is included throughout the District's initiatives for children with special needs. In 2012-2013, 6.8 percent of the 12,426 pre-K children received special education services.

DCPS initiatives at the preschool level include: inclusion classrooms, using the Tools of the Mind curriculum, staffed with a teacher certified in both early childhood education and special education, and two trained classroom instructional paraprofessionals. The Early Learning Support Program (P-2) is staffed with special education teachers and classroom instructional paraprofessionals. Teachers are trained to meet the educational needs of students with developmental delays and classroom instructional paraprofessionals also receive training and support in the area of data collection and meeting individual student needs. Specially trained and certified related service providers provide supports to students and classroom staff.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** All children must be screened and a home language survey is sent to all families. Information is made available for parents on the web in multiple languages, including Amharic, Chinese, French, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. All ELL children must be provided with appropriate services, bilingual staff, and written plans specifying how individual ELL needs will be met. The DC preschool program has a substantial number of dual language or bilingual providers and considerable continuity in this approach through subsequent grades. The District has 8 Spanish-English bilingual elementary schools and charter schools also offer bilingual education with Hebrew, French, and Mandarin, as well as Spanish. The DC Language Immersion Project advocates for the expansion of such immersion programs to all families who want to participate.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Since 2008, DC has awarded Pre-K Incentive Program Grants to private providers to help them meet the quality requirements of the Pre-K Act. These requirements include providing technical assistance and coaching support for educators. The District has begun using the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) to continuously improve effective teaching. In 2014, a baseline was set and reported for CLASS scores based on a sample of 491 classrooms that included community providers not receiving funds from DC. In 2015, CLASS scores were obtained and reported on 345 DCPS pre-K classrooms, 322 PCS classrooms, and 144 CBO classrooms serving pre-K. Average scores improved from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015. Mean scores were 5.77 for emotional support, 5.40 for Classroom Organization, and 2.59 for Instructional Support. The Emotional Support and Classroom Organization scores are comparable to those in exemplars such as Boston, but the Instructional Support Score is lower, about the average reported for state pre-K programs more generally. Although DC does not report scores separately by auspice, it can be inferred from what they have presented that Instructional Support scores were higher for the public schools including charters within the DC system. However, we can't determine whether they are appreciably better.

**Child assessments.** DC piloted TS GOLD with a sample of 800 children in 2013. Teachers and program administrators use data to measure children’s progress and differentiate instruction. The District has joined a multi-state consortium (PARCC) to design formative assessments for grades Pre-K-3. By the fall of 2016, the District will be equipped for a full-scale implementation of these assessments. Should this be implemented as planned this would move from DC from “not determined” to fully implementing this element in 2016.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** DC Public Charter Schools use its Early Childhood Performance Management Framework to hold programs accountable to quality standards. The Framework dictates that all programs are scored annually on student outcomes, student attendance, and that teacher-child interactions are measured using the CLASS assessment. Information collected using the Framework is shared with families and community-members. Public schools and community based organizations are also collecting CLASS data to inform program and classroom quality.

In spring 2014, the District began implementing the Early Development Inventory (EDI) tool, a population-based measure that provides a snapshot of children’s health, development, and school readiness. OSSE contracted with UCLA’s Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities to assist with administration of the EDI. OSSE plans to report the data by 39 geographic boundaries and use the data to inform planning efforts at both the local and district level, to make resource allocation decisions, and to track child outcomes over time. In 2014-2015, data from 2,000 children from pre-K classrooms in DCPS, PCSs, and CBOs were collected.

An analysis by OSSE of the DC Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) results controlling for ethnicity (but not other differences among students) found significantly higher proficiency in math and reading for Pre-K participants compared to those who did not attend.

**Professional development.** The District has developed a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, DC Professionals Receiving Opportunities and Support (DC PROS). DC PROS outlines a set of expectations that describes what early childhood educators should know and be able to do. The District’s professional development and public higher education system are aligned to DC PROS. Since 2010, the District has invested over \$2.1 million in the TEACH program and another almost \$2 million in scholarships for Pre-K teachers to meet BA degree requirements. The district’s pre-K program engages in a continuous improvement process that emphasizes coaching and the use of CLASS to identify professional development needs.

**Integrated system.** Standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and continuous improvement responses are woven together in an integrated system. The system is complicated by the somewhat independent actions of the two state agencies and the Public School Charter Board, with the added complication of federal Head Start and child care regulations for private providers. The system encompasses not only pre-K, but also other programs for infants and toddlers. The District has made efforts to coordinate quality improvements for all of these programs to better address the needs of children prior to age three so that they enter the pre-K program having had stronger support for development. These efforts include a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) that is being updated to ensure greater alignment across program settings. OSSE is finalizing the QRIS framework and plans to pilot it in a representative sample of programs across all sectors in fall 2016.

The District’s Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse (SLED) is a single repository of student and education-related data needed to improve education planning, management, reporting, instruction and evaluation. The District has invested greatly into this system and it provides a robust, centralized platform of information from early childhood through K-12, post-secondary and into adult education and employment. For this reason, the District has determined that it is more appropriate and effective to continue with the existing work of SLED to

support reform efforts, rather than implement additional initiatives that would risk inefficiencies and duplication of information.

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## Florida

### Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program was created as a result of the 2002 state constitutional amendment requiring prekindergarten access for all of Florida's 4-year-olds. The program began operating in 2005, serving approximately 100,000 children. Since that time, enrollment increased steadily to more than 175,000 children in 2011-2012. In the past three years, enrollment has been down and in the 2014-2015 school year, 166,522 children were enrolled in VPK. Parents are now able to apply online for VPK through the Family Portal.

Funding for VPK comes solely from Florida's general revenue. VPK funding for 2014-2015 was \$383,703,444 a slight increase over 2013-2014's spending of \$381,108,517. All of Florida's 67 school districts offer VPK. Age-eligible children are enrolled in either a 300 hour summer program, which every school district is mandated to offer, or a school year program totaling 540 instructional hours.

A variety of settings provide VPK, such as public schools, accredited nonpublic schools, licensed child care centers, accredited faith based centers, and licensed family child care homes. In 2014-2015, there were 6,472 VPK programs, with 82 percent of the children provided services in nonpublic school settings. Private settings must be licensed or if they are licensed exempt must have a Gold Seal (Florida's QRIS) or be accredited by an approved accrediting association. Regional early learning coalitions are formed to monitor programs for compliance and administer VPK. The coalitions also distribute funds to VPK programs based on a fixed hourly rate.

Florida's School Readiness Program, a separate initiative begun in 1999, expanded in 2001 by incorporating two other state programs—the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program, which focused on young children's health, and the State Migrant Prekindergarten Program, which served 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents are migratory agricultural or fishing industry laborers—offers financial assistance for child care to qualified parents. NIEER has not evaluated this program in the Yearbook.

Florida's VPK program meets 3 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks including requiring a maximum class size of 20, having comprehensive early learning standards, and conducting site visits and monitoring of the program.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 79.1 percent of age-eligible children in Florida were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 81.8 percent attending full-day programs.

In K-12 education, Florida spent \$8,433 spending per child, ranking it the 42nd highest in the nation. Florida's NAEP scores were higher than its neighboring states (Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi). The state's grade four reading scores were also higher than the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions, Florida ranked 50th overall for union power and influence, or "weakest", which was in the fifth tier of five.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program meets **one** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **five** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	○	–	ND	○	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Rick Scott (R) is currently in his second term. When Governor Scott signed the 2013-2014 *Florida Families First budget* he expressed his commitment to early learning by allocating more than \$1 billion to programs, including an additional amount of \$5 million for school readiness, the first increase in funds for early learning coalitions in ten years. The Governor’s proposed 2016-2017 *Florida First budget* provides a \$50 increase per student for the school year and a \$43 increase per student for the summer program for 2015-2016. This equates to per student funding of \$2,487 per student and \$2,123 per student, respectively. Florida ranked 39<sup>th</sup> out of 42 states and DC in per-student spending in 2014-2015, a year in which both enrollment and total funding declined from the previous year.

State Senator John Legg (R) (Chair, Education Pre-K-12) and Representative Marlene O’Toole (R) (Chair, Education) have supported legislation that increase compliance and quality through higher staff qualifications, but not to the level sought by local advocates.

The Children's Movement of Florida evolved from the 2008 reauthorization campaign for The Children’s Trust in Miami-Dade County. The reauthorization campaign was led by David Lawrence Jr., a journalist and former publisher of The Miami Herald. After retiring from The Herald in 1999, Lawrence devoted himself to children's issues, leading The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation.

In 2015, Early Learning Florida, a public-private partnership led by Donald Pemberton, director of the University of Florida’s Lastinger Center for Learning, was rolled out. It’s funded with \$3 million from philanthropic foundations and \$2 million from the Legislature. The online learning system aims to help early childhood professionals gain the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality care and education to children newborn to age 5.



The Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) (Condoleezza Rice, Board Chair) is led by Patricia Levesque (CEO) who previously served as Gov. Jeb Bush's Deputy Chief of Staff for education, enterprise solutions for government, minority procurement, and business and professional regulation. Excelin Ed works on education policy development, advocacy, and offers technical assistance in both Florida and nationally. Pre-K is not specified on the reform agenda, but included as one of the components of student achievement.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) was established as an independent agency administratively linked to the DOE, separated from Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation in 2011. HB 7165 (2013) moved OEL to the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice. Rodney MacKinnon was named Executive Director of OEL in 2014. He has worked at OEL since 2007 as a compliance analyst, an assistant general counsel, and inspector general.

While OEL governs day-to-day operations of statewide early learning programs and administers federal and state child care funds, across the state there are 30 regional early learning coalitions and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association responsible for delivering local services. The coalitions are nonprofit organizations that are monitored annually by OEL.

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe has an early childhood initiative, including promoting and expanding VPK. Within the ELC, the Alliance for Early Care & Education (AECE) (Linda Carmona-Sanchez, President) operates as a collaborative, tiered-membership charitable organization that is led by early learning practitioners and inclusive of key stakeholders. Roseann Fricks is the Executive Director of the Early Learning Coalition of Marion County and serves as the Chair of the statewide Association of Early Learning Coalitions.

Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for licensing programs and operating the state's QRIS, Gold Seal Quality Care Program Accreditation which is one of the approved accreditations a child care provider can obtain to be eligible to participate in VPK.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Teacher qualification requirements are different for the summer and school-year VPK programs. Teachers in the summer programs must have a BA in early childhood, primary, or preschool education, prekindergarten disabilities, family and consumer science, or elementary education. Teachers in the school-year programs are required to have a CDA or the Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) equivalent and must have completed a DOE course on emergent literacy. A CDA or FCCPC must be renewed every five years.

Assistant teachers do not have to meet any degree requirements, but must complete a 40-hour training for licensed child care providers.

Teachers and assistant teachers in VPK public school or nonpublic school settings are not paid on par with district salary schedules of K-12 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** During a special legislative session in 2009, the Florida Legislature adjusted the staff-child ratio for the summer program from 1:10 to 1:12. In 2011, the legislature changed the staff child ratio for the school year to require one teacher for classes of up to 11 students.

**Learning time.** All school districts are required to offer the summer VPK program. VPK programs may choose to

operate a 300-hour summer program or a school year program, totaling at least 540 hours of service. The operating schedule and hours are determined locally, but most school year programs operate 3 hours per day, 5 days per week. Most summer programs operate 8 hours per day, 5 days per week. Providers are allowed to determine their individual calendars to meet those requirements.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Florida's VPK has a maximum class size of 20 during the school year and 12 in the summer. As previously described, the ratio of adults to children is 1:12 (school year) and 1:11 (summer). One adult is allowed for VPK classes of more than 10 in both programs.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** In 2011, the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Four-Year-Olds was approved by the State Board of Education, which all programs were required to meet in the 2012-2013 school year. The comprehensive standards are aligned to the kindergarten Florida Standards.

The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Teacher Toolkit is a series of folders that provides content information, video, and resources that support VPK teachers in instructional planning and aligns with Florida's early learning standards. Content areas include Language and Vocabulary, Family Involvement, Mathematical Thinking, the Florida VPK Assessment, and English Language Learners. OEL revised its face-to-face courses on the early learning standards during 2014-2015. There are three course levels organized by the practitioner's level of experience: entry, career and director.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** VPK providers may select or design their own curriculum, unless they are on probation as a result of their kindergarten readiness rates falling below the minimum rate. The curriculum must be "developmentally appropriate, designed to prepare a student for early literacy, enhance age-appropriate student progress in attaining state-adopted performance standards, and prepare students to be ready for kindergarten based on the statewide kindergarten screening." If a program falls below the minimum readiness rate, then there is a list of approved curricula. Only comprehensive curricula that cover all domains of the early learning standards are reviewed for approval.

**Support for students with special needs.** VPK Specialized Instructional Services (VPK SIS) allows parents of a VPK age child to choose additional therapies consistent with the child's IEP in lieu of attending VPK in a traditional classroom setting. VPK SIS providers must be approved by DOE and meet specific licensing or certification requirements based on the type of specialized service they provide. VPK SIS saw enrollment increases in 2014-2015, but only served less than 1 percent of the VPK children.

The state has a toll-free number, known as the warm line, to provide assistance and consultation about including children with disabilities and special health care needs. Each early learning coalition provides warm line services for child care providers on topics including positive behavioral support, curriculum strategies, child development, health, environmental adaptations, and laws and regulations. The 2014 Florida Statutes include information on the rights of parents and students with special needs.

The early learning coalitions have inclusion coordinators who provide on-site technical assistance to VPK providers about classroom routine, scheduling, classroom management, appropriate supportive activities, and modifications that include all children. They also sponsor conferences with parents, directors, and teachers to develop support plans for specific children and the overall classroom.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** State policy does not regulate services for English Language Learners (ELLs). As previously described, the VPK Teacher Toolkit provides links to existing VPK courses and

resources including a section on ELLs in the VPK Classroom. The School Readiness Fact Sheet has been translated into Spanish.

The Florida DOE has the authority to grant Good Cause Exemptions (waivers) from performance requirements for specific populations, which may include children with disabilities and ELLs.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS or ECERS observations are not required by OEL and data on VPK's level of quality teaching are not available. A voluntary statewide capacity-building initiative offers CLASS trainings to early learning coalition staff, Head Start/Early Head Start staff, OEL staff, training partners and early education provider association representatives. All 30 early learning coalitions participated in the training and can now offer these courses to local providers including VPK programs.

**Child assessments.** All VPK providers must use TS Gold as specified in [statute](#). TS GOLD must be administered by individuals who have participated in an OEL sponsored training. Additional training on the use of child assessments is available through coalitions, DOE, and DCF via online and/or in-person workshops.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The early learning coalitions monitor staff credentials and provide guidance to coalitions on elements for program monitoring. There is no requirement that each provider receive a site visit at least once during a specified period. Rather, the site visits are determined by random sample except where follow-up is needed due to technical assistance or corrective action plan follow-up. Each early learning coalition is responsible for the on-site monitoring of VPK providers and for monthly attendance records reviews. The coalition monitors a sample of VPK providers on an annual basis. DCF monitors all licensed programs at least three times per year and posts reports online.

The Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS), composed of FAIR and ECHOS assessments, had been administered annually to all kindergarteners in public schools and to all available kindergarteners attending nonpublic schools as a state assessment by the DOE. Results of children participating in VPK were compared to those who have not participated in the program and reviewed annually as part of the legislative appropriation process using the Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Assessment. Results from the first and third assessment periods were collected and used as a pre- and post-assessment to demonstrate learning gains. A [searchable database](#) reported readiness rates by early learning coalition. If a VPK provider failed to meet the minimum readiness rate adopted for two consecutive years, future funding was jeopardized. The assessment and its use were suspended due to problems and a new assessment implemented in 2015 was also suspended.

Florida's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability has conducted several [studies](#) on VPK. The most recent one in 2012 reviewed elements of the program and found that children taught by teachers with a BA's or higher performed slightly better on kindergarten readiness assessments than children taught by teachers with a CDA. VPK School-Year Program participants performed better on kindergarten readiness assessments than those in the VPK Summer Program. Children in three-hour or six-hour VPK programs performed about the same on these assessments. Kindergarten readiness rates were about the same for public and private providers, while children from faith-based VPK settings performed better on readiness assessments than children from other types of VPK providers.

**Professional development.** VPK teachers are required to complete 10 clock hours of PD per year. Training in specified performance standards and emergent literacy is also required. Assistant teachers must complete a 40-hour training course for those employed at licensed child care facilities. This training course is offered by DCF.

Additionally, VPK providers on probation completing the Staff Development Plan as a part of their improvement plan are required to have directors, VPK instructors, and VPK assistants complete several additional trainings.

The 30 early learning coalitions provide free training and technical assistance to VPK providers on a range of subjects such as early learning standards, child screenings and assessments, developmentally appropriate curricula, teacher-child interactions, age-appropriate discipline practices, health and safety, recognizing communicable diseases, and detecting/preventing child abuse. In addition, DOE in collaboration with DCF offer a variety of both online and instructor-led training opportunities. An interactive online resource has information about core competencies and resources to facilitate learning. As previously described, Early Learning Florida offers a series of online courses that lead to CEUs and in-service training hours.

**Integrated system.** With the passage of HB ADD (2013), OEL is required to periodically review and revise the performance standards for the statewide kindergarten screening tool and align the standards to the standards established by the state board for student performance on the statewide assessments administered. The voluntary child assessment project aligns with the early learning standards. Each early learning coalition is required to maintain a single point of entry database of the students enrolled in VPK. VPK programs are not required to participate in QRIS. Licensed exempt private VPK providers may participate in their local QRIS.

## Key Contacts

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VPK Fact Sheet for Families



## Georgia

### Georgia's Pre-K Program

In 1995, Georgia's Pre-K Program (GPK) became the nation's first state-funded universal preschool program for 4-year-olds, expanding upon a targeted preschool program started three years earlier when only 750 students were served in 20 locations. The program served 80,430 children, 59 percent of the eligible population across all 159 counties during 2014-2015 in a variety of settings, including public schools, private child care centers, faith-based organizations, Head Start agencies, state colleges and universities, and military facilities. The school-day program is available throughout the entire state. However, the number of available slots has been capped in recent years due to budgetary constraints. Funding is generated through state lottery revenues, receiving one-third of lottery proceeds. Administered by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), GPK also funds a Summer Transition Program to serve students who were on a waitlist for pre-K or needed an additional six weeks of instruction, including dual-language learners.

For many years GPK had been one of a handful of state-funded pre-K programs to meet all 10 NIEER quality standard benchmarks. In 2011-2012, GPK underwent a number of changes in response to budgetary constraints. The program year was cut by 20 days, the maximum class size set at 22 students, and a teacher-student ratio of 1:11 was allowed. With these changes, GPK fell to 8 benchmarks. An increase in teacher turnover occurred when the state also implemented a cap of Training and Experience (T&E) supplemental pay for certified teachers in public schools. Ten days were added back for the following year, and another 10 during the 2013-2014 year to return the program to its 180-day schedule. While not meeting NIEER's quality standard benchmarks, the program complies with Gates' Essential Elements for class size and adult-child ratio. Efforts are currently underway to restore smaller class size and ratios.

In 2014, Georgia was awarded a competitive federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC) to continue expanding access and improving quality. RTT-ELC funds support Georgia's Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) where there is a strong investment in using a two-generation approach to improve outcomes modeled on the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University's [Frontiers of Innovation](#) initiative. Georgia also received a K-12 Race to the Top grant which includes an initiative where Georgia's Pre-K teachers are receiving specialized professional development related to the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to improve classroom interactions and instruction.

In K-12 education, Georgia spent \$9,099 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 37<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. In the 2012-2013 school year, Georgia's NAEP scores were at or below national averages, including 39 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scoring at or proficient in math and 34 percent in reading. In the 2012-2013 school year, Georgia schools reported a graduation rate of 71.5 percent, making it the fifth-lowest graduation rate in the country. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Georgia ranked 45th overall for union power and influence, or "weakest," which was the fifth of five tiers.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Georgia meets **11** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	—	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** GPK’s established history and presence in every county has created a culture where GPK is considered a “fact of Georgia life,” and as a result has significant political support even though new, visible champions do not necessarily stand out within the legislature. Over the 23-year history, GPK has been supported by each governor beginning with Zell Miller providing the political impetus behind GPK. Governor Deal (R) recently pledged an additional \$50 million to support the quality of the program, which is still recovering from the adverse effects of the Great Recession and decreased lottery revenues. In his January 2015 State of the State address, Gov. Deal said, “It is...important that our pre-K through high school programs continue to improve the quality of our students. We must work to avoid the necessity of costly remediation. If we hope for the greatest results, we must get it right the first time!”

Gov. Deal formed an Education Reform Commission in January 2015, and appointed the DECAL Commissioner, Amy Jacobs, as chair of the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee. One of only five subcommittees, the group is charged with making recommendations to expand access to Georgia’s Pre-K Program and improve program quality. Recommendations focus on increasing teacher compensation and reducing class size. However, there are indications that modifying and strengthening its funding capacity are also being explored. A second Commission subcommittee is examining teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation with implications for GPK. Gov. Deal will consider the Commission’s recommendations for his 2017 budget proposal. Until Gov. Deal’s proposals are finalized and made available, it is premature to assess the full extent of his support for improving quality and access for all children.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Georgia has a separate state agency governing services for children birth to five and their families. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) which oversees programs serving children from birth through five years, including GPK, childcare subsidy (CAPS), the Quality Rated tiered quality rating and improvement system, professional development, the Head Start State Collaboration Office, Early Learning Challenge grants, and licensing. Despite shifts in DECAL leadership, with new governors typically appointing the Commissioner, there has been remarkable stability within the agency, often supported by long-time Executive Assistant to the Commissioner Mark Waits. Susan Adams remains perhaps the



best informed person on GPK matters, Kristin Bernhard on Early Learning Challenge and systems reform efforts, Bentley Ponder for research and evaluation, and Pam Stevens for QRIS.

In January 2015, former Senior Policy Advisor for Education at the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget, Commissioner Amy Jacobs was appointed to replace former Com. Bobby Cagle as DECAL's leader. With an interest in tax incentives to promote and support Georgia's early childhood programs, Mrs. Jacobs also chairs the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee for Gov. Deal's Education Reform Commission.

DECAL has utilized the services of the BUILD Initiative to address several systems issues, including financing for child care with Anne Mitchell. Georgia is a state partner of the Alliance for Early Success.

The Georgia Department of Education (GDE) largely retains authority on early education programs K–3 along with early childhood special education (Title B Section 619), Title I, and literacy initiatives. Jan Stevenson has been a veteran early childhood leader within GDE and was recently elected to the Governing Board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Leadership also extends to business, philanthropy, and advocates, which have a history of effectively working together to advance high-quality early education. Voices for Georgia's Children (Emily Pelton, Ex. Dir.) is an effective advocacy group and particularly strong proponent of GPK and children's issues in general. Long-time Voices ED Pat Willis retired in June 2015 and remains active on the advocacy front. Voices Advocacy Director Polly McKinney stays abreast of policy developments in the legislature and beyond. Annually, Voices sponsors Georgia's Pre-K Week and invites all state legislators to visit a Pre-K classroom in support of the program. In 2014, approximately 75% of the legislature completed a visit joined by state school superintendent John Barge and other state agency leaders.

Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) is another strong organization that has played an important role publicly and privately. GEEARS Chair Stephanie Blank (Strategic Advisor to Arthur Blank Foundation (Home Depot)) is part of a leadership team that includes Georgia Public Broadcasting, United Way of Metro Atlanta, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, and others. GEEARS Executive Director Mindy Binderman has provided strong leadership to GEEARS and is a member of Early Childhood Education Subcommittee. GEEARS has been instrumental in coalescing the philanthropic community to support early education.

The Georgia Child Care Association (Carolyn Salvador, ED) is a well-organized professional membership organization having the ears of state leaders. Represented in all major policy discussions and having representation on the Gov.'s Early Childhood Education Subcommittee, GCCA represents more than 900 private, public, and corporate child care centers located across the state and pays careful attention to impact of pre-K or other state actions that may affect providers.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Georgia requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. Funding to programs is based on a formula calculating lead teachers being paid on par with a statewide entry-level kindergarten teacher, regardless of the number of years of experience or advanced credentials teachers may possess. Public school programs are expected to pay lead teachers at this level, though many LEAs take into account credentials and experience. Annual GPK salaries are published based on credentials and settings. However, even with these policies there are very large pay gaps between pre-K teachers in both public and private settings and K-12 teachers.

Assistant teachers are required to have a minimum of a CDA or paraprofessional credential requiring an AA or equivalent course credits, and pass an ECE examination and background check.

**Adult-child ratios.** Georgia has a maximum class size of 22 four-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:11, however most programs have a 1:9 ratio. When class size and ratio requirements changed in 2012 in response to state budgetary pressures, Georgia lost two NIEER quality standard benchmarks, however these numbers meet the Essential Element limits of 22 children per class, and are within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

Head Start programs offering services still maintain the previously established maximum class size of 20 children with a 1:10 ratio in accordance with federal requirements.

**Learning time.** Children attend Georgia's pre-K program five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 6.5 hours per day. Wrap-around services extending the length of the school day are common in most nonpublic settings, typically funded with child care subsidy or parent fees. This "dosage" of early learning time meets the criteria found in high-quality, effective programs.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and assistant teacher with at least a CDA or paraprofessional credential are present at all times during the 6.5 hour education program. Itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services. Classroom volunteers are encouraged to supplement the two adult minimum requirement.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) can be considered model early learning standards for their developmentally appropriate content, online usability, resources, and training/support. Embedded instructional videos with exemplary teaching practices are tailored to teachers and administrators in child care and public pre-K as well as parents. GELDS is aligned with Kindergarten content standards and Common Core State Standards, and is also integrated into Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system.

**Proven curriculum.** Georgia has an approved list of research-based curricula which was recently reviewed to align with new early learning and kindergarten standards. Criteria have also been developed for approving other curriculum models, done as part of work with Lynn Kagan and Catherine Scott Little to align curricula with standards and assessment. DECAL provides funds for materials and training but discontinued providing direct training on specific curricula, instead contracting with the Best Practices Training Initiative at Georgia State University to provide annual training specific to Pre-K to all lead and assistant teachers.

**Support for students with special needs.** Having made inclusion a priority for more than a decade, DECAL believes it has made significant progress for including children with special needs in state pre-K. More than 3,000 children with special needs are enrolled in programs, and programs must indicate in their annual application if they will be full-inclusion classrooms where a full- or part-time certified special educator is present, all specialized services are "pushed-in" rather than "pulled-out," and children attend the program full-time with typically developing peer models. More than 120 Georgia pre-K classrooms use the full-inclusion model. All teachers receive professional development training on working with special needs children and DECAL employs regional inclusion specialists to provide embedded TA. DECAL also allows these classrooms to receive full classroom and additional funding while serving fewer children than regulations permit in order to provide more individualized services. Georgia Pre-K uses a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach in its classrooms, incorporating the Pyramid Model.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Georgia reported that 8,087 pre-K students, or 10 percent, were English Language Learners in 2014-2015. Bilingual and monolingual non-English pre-K classes are permitted and



professional development and coaching are provided to teachers. Recognizing the increasing population of young DLLs in communities throughout the state and the challenges this presents for families and schools when children enter kindergarten, DECAL has taken special steps to address the needs of these students. In 2013, DECAL began piloting a Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program to support children registered to enter Georgia's Pre-K or Head Start in the fall whose home language is Spanish. Also, DECAL has partnered with World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) to roll out a comprehensive plan for supporting, instructing, and assessing DLLs, age 2.5–5.5 years. Finally, 40 regional TA specialists received intensive language/literacy training including DLL strategies in partnership with the Georgia Coalition for ELL and Atlanta's Rollins Center for Language and Literacy. However, GA provides no additional funds to programs to support DLL children, requires no qualifications of teachers regarding DLL instruction, does not require children to be assessed in the home language, and does not provide materials to families in their home language.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Effective, developmentally appropriate teaching practices are strongly emphasized and supported by DECAL. The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) serve as a foundation for standards-based and standards-referenced instruction. Video exemplars are embedded in the online version of GELDS to demonstrate effective pedagogy. Realizing that teacher-child interaction is an important component, DECAL works with Teachstone to train its 40 field-based regional consultants on using Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS)-based models to continuously improve effective teaching (see Professional Development below). Some questions persist regarding variations of quality teaching and interactions across settings, especially in child care settings or Head Start, however, DECAL continues its systematic efforts through use of CLASS and monitoring to ensure all children receive excellent instruction.

The evaluation of the 2011-2012 Pre-K found that mean total ECERS-R score across a sample of 100 GPK classrooms was 3.6, which represents a medium quality range. The average CLASS score (on a 7.0 scale) was in the middle to high quality range on Emotional Support (5.5), in the upper end of the middle range on Classroom Organization (5.2), and in the low to middle range on Instructional Support (2.8). A longitudinal study (2013-2014) of 199 randomly selected GPK classrooms had similar ECERS-R average scores (3.7) and CLASS average on Emotional Support (5.7), Classroom Organization (5.5), and Instructional Support (2.5).

**Child assessments.** DECAL has been “heavily involved” in ensuring that child assessment is used for formative, instructional planning purposes. After conducting a study about a decade ago, DECAL decided to require use of the Work Sampling System (WSS) based on its comprehensiveness and alignment with early learning standards, and continues to provide training on using WSS results for formative purposes. Two years ago, DECAL made the shift to WSS online for all pre-K programs. Data are transferred directly to kindergarten teachers as results are part of the state longitudinal data system. Data are also used on the state level to make decisions about professional development and program support.

All pre-K teachers are paid for an 8-hour day with 6.5 hours dedicated to direct teaching and the remainder for planning curriculum, incorporating results of on-going assessment, attending professional development, communicating with families, and related teaching responsibilities.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Georgia's use of data and evaluation is a major factor contributing to the state's commitment to improving and expanding access to its pre-K program. DECAL employs a full-time researcher (Dr. Bentley Ponder) and commissions external research studies, most recently with Dr. Ellen Peisner-Feinberg at UNC-Chapel Hill, to assemble an active research agenda to guide decisions. Supported

by the Georgia legislature, a series of ongoing studies have been conducted to examine children's learning and outcomes of the GPK program, findings were previously described. Several evaluation studies can be found [here](#). Data are used at all levels to make informed decisions, and the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee of Gov. Deal's Education Reform Commission has been provided with abundant data as they prepare recommendations for Pre-K's future. On the classroom level, teachers and program administrators use WSS data in real time for measuring children's progress, designing curricula, and differentiating instruction with the support of trained coaches. Similarly, DECAL uses data to identify professional development needs of pre-K teachers and allocate resources to programs and support professional development.

Georgia began a multi-year evaluation in 2011, which was conducted by the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. [Evaluation](#) results showed that participation in Georgia's Pre-K Program significantly improved children's school readiness skills across a wide range of language, literacy, math, and general knowledge measures, while there was no impact on social behavior skills where GPK children met the norm.

**Professional development.** DECAL invests significant resources into professional development for its pre-K teachers and administrators. Georgia's Pre-K offers free professional development annually for all lead and assistant teachers. This training is developed through a contract with the Best Practices Training Initiative at Georgia State University. All training offered is hybrid training with both face-to-face and online components. Professional development is offered in sequential tracks to support both beginning and veteran teachers. Each training session integrates standards and child assessment. In addition, Georgia has approximately 40 educational specialists (Pre-K consultants) who are employed by the agency and are field-based across the state, who provide on-site technical support and professional development.

As previously described, all pre-K teachers are paid for an 8-hour day with 6.5 hours dedicated to direct teaching and the remainder for using formative assessment, including curriculum planning and family communication.

Through its K-12 Race to the Top grant, Georgia conducted a 3-year research [study](#) on PD models to improve teacher-child interactions, resulting in development of coaching and facilitation skills of professional learning communities in Pre-K staff. Coaching and professional learning communities are now integrated into the PD system of Georgia's Pre-K program. Each specialist works with an identified cohort of teachers annually.

DECAL offers [scholarships and incentives](#) through its [DECAL Scholars](#) program to retain and develop its professionals.

**Integrated system.** Standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and evaluation are woven together in Georgia's integrated system, emphasizing data-driven decisions on the state, local, and program level. The system encompasses not only pre-K, but also other programs such as child care and Head Start. Several of these components are used to measure program quality in Quality Rated, and engage programs in an incentive-supported continuous improvement cycle. Quality Rated was introduced in 2012 and experienced rapid growth. Programs participating in the voluntary 3-level QRIS system receive progressively higher rates of child care subsidy reimbursement based on quality.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

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## Hawaii

### Hawaii Executive Office of Early Learning Public Pre-K Program

The Executive Office of Early Learning (EOEL) launched Hawaii's first publicly funded pre-K program in 2014-2015 with an initial \$3 million investment. In 2014-2015, 365 children attended the EOEL Public Pre-K Program, 2.1 percent of the state's 4-year-old population.

In the 2014-2015 school year, the EOEL's Public Pre-K Program supported 20 classrooms in 18 schools across the state, serving 365 students. These classrooms serve 4-year-old students in the year before they are eligible to attend K, with priority given to those students who are considered to be "at-risk." These 20 classrooms were supported by 20 teachers, 20 educational assistants (i.e., assistant teachers), 5 resource teachers (i.e., coaches), and an educational specialist.

Hawaii met 9 out of the 10 NIEER Yearbook benchmarks; teachers are not required to have specialized training in pre-K.

In addition to its new investment in publicly funded pre-K via the EOEL Public Pre-K Program, in 2014, Hawaii was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG). The PDG is administered by the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission who began implementation with four charter school classrooms beginning in 2015-2016, focusing on schools with Hawaiian cultural elements including language embedded throughout instruction and family engagement activities.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 80.7 percent of age-eligible children in Hawaii were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 92.4 percent attending full-day programs, ranking highest among all states.

In K-12 education, Hawaii spent \$11,823 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 17<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In the 2012-2013 school year, Hawaii students scored below the national average for reading at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades; but higher in math at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Hawaii schools reported a graduation rate of 82.4 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, slightly higher than the national average. A plurality of students in Hawaii are of Asian descent, about 33 percent of the student population in the state and 32.8 percent of students are identified as Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander.

In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Hawaii ranked first overall for union power and influence, or "strongest." The Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA) was formally incorporated in 1971.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014).

Hawaii meets **eight** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **two** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	—	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	●	ND	●	—	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Former Gov. Neil Abercrombie (D) campaigned on early learning and was successful in establishing EOEL and housing it temporarily in the governor’s office, creating a state-funded pre-K program, and successfully applying for the federal PDG. His re-election loss in 2014, brought Gov. David Ige (D) into office who is seen as less supportive of early learning. He declined to appoint a Director of EOEL until the office moved, as defined in statute, out of the governor’s office and into an office administratively attached to DOE. Gov. Ige is supportive of public education and has been vocal on wanting preschool state investments to occur in the public schools. His position was one of the factors attributed to the failure of the Constitutional Amendment in November 2014, which asked voters to decide if state funds could be used to fund programs housed in the private sector. As a result of this vote, the state funded pre-K program is limited to public and public charter schools within the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE).

U.S. State Senator [Mazie Hirono](#) (D) is supportive of early learning as well as local representatives including the Chair of the Education Committee, Roy Takumi and Senator Jill Tokuda, Chair of Ways and Means.

The [Hawaii Children’s Action Network](#) (formerly named Good Beginnings Alliance) is Hawaii’s early childhood advocacy group, which focuses on a wide range of children’s issues. There are several local foundations that support early learning, including [Kamehameha Schools](#), [Harold K.L. Castle Foundation](#), and the [Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation](#). The [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) has supported the Hawaii P-3 Initiative and several smaller projects, but the large P-3 grants (over \$11 million) are almost complete.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** [Lauren Moriguchi](#) was appointed Director of EOEL in July 2015 to coordinate early childhood education services currently offered within the public school system and guide policy around the expansion of early childhood education through collaboration with legislators and the governor. She has worked for over 15 years in HIDOE at the school, district and state levels. She has a small office comprised of three staff, including the Head Start State Collaboration Office Director. During the 2016 fiscal year, the EOEL office was funded for one staff member with an extremely limited operating budget.

HIDOE is the only statewide public education system in the U.S. comprising only one school district. In July of 2015, the EOEL became attached to the DOE for administrative purposes only; at this time the EOEL is not considered a part of the DOE. Currently, all pre-K classrooms are located within public schools, as is mandated by a provision in the Hawaii state constitution that bars the distribution of public funds to privately run programs.

While Pre-Kindergarten classrooms are housed on HIDOE campuses, the Pre-Kindergarten Program falls under EOEL as it did during the 2014-2015 school year. The HIDOE is not responsible for the Pre-Kindergarten Program as their focus is on the K-12 construct. [Kathy Matayoshi](#), Superintendent, is a supporter of early learning, having served on the board of Good Beginnings Alliance, however the Board of Education has set its mission to begin its efforts with kindergarteners.

### **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Teachers in the EOEL Public Pre-K Program are part of HSTA and, as such, are granted parity with teachers in the K-12 grades. Reflecting a commitment to quality standards, lead teachers in the Public Pre-K Program are required to have a BA, while assistant teachers are required to have an associate's degree.

**Adult-child ratios.** Hawaii has a maximum class size of 20 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class.

**Learning time.** Children attend EOEL Pre-K five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 6.5 hours per day, mirroring the kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade schedule.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with and assistant teacher are present at all times during the 6.5 hour education program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** [Hawaii Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (HELDS) were adopted in 2012. They are aligned with Common Core and the HIDOE's General Learner Outcomes standards. Support materials have been developed by Hawaii P-3.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The EOEL does not endorse any one preschool curriculum. Curriculum decisions are currently made by the principal and teachers at most sites, and by principals alone in a few sites. Some programs use Creative Curriculum and supplement with literacy and math curriculum used in the kindergarten. Resource teachers and EOEL staff currently work with schools to implement emergent curriculum and inquiry/project-work approaches.

**Support for students with special needs.** Hawaii has a separate special education preschool program operated by HIDOE. In 2014-2015, 2,364 children had IEPs. Hawaii has enrolled children with IEPs into the program and is working with Hawai'i DOE to best meet the needs of these students in their least restrictive environment.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The state of Hawaii has maintained a long-standing commitment to supporting dual language learners. Hawaii has two official state languages, Hawaiian and English. Hawaii is also a WIDA Consortium member state. This membership means that Hawaii participates in ACCESS ELLs, which is a secure large-scale English language proficiency assessment given to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as English language learners (ELLs). It is given annually in WIDA Consortium member states to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English.

### **Strong Program Practices**

**High quality teaching.** Classrooms in the EOEL Public Pre-K Program participate in CLASS observations twice a year, however CLASS data were not available for review.

**Child assessments.** TS GOLD is required for formative assessment and data are required to be entered three times a year. Teachers are supported in using GOLD through ongoing coaching as well as participation in GOLD training and follow-up technical assistance.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Fiscal monitoring and site visits occur annually. In 2015-2016 schools with pre-K classrooms submitted quarterly enrollment reports. Children's progress was reported via TS Gold online assessment reports. Principals and teachers were surveyed regarding their understanding of high quality and recommendations for professional development and program support.

Hawaii's pre-K program has not had an independent evaluation, but the Hawaii P-3 Initiative was [evaluated](#) by RAND over a five-year period (2009–2014). The study examined the implementation of local plans in five demonstration sites and the initiative's state-level work and found that most statewide and local P-3 work is likely to contribute to long-term change in Hawaii's P–3 landscape.

**Professional development.** At least 60 hours of PD are offered to teachers per year and the union contract requires that all teachers participate in 21 hours of in-service annually. During the 2014-2015 school year, on average, teachers attended 24 hours of training. Five Resource Teachers, fully-released from classroom teaching, serve as coaches to the 20 classrooms. Due to Hawaii's geography, coach to teacher ratios range from 1:3 to 1:6. Coaches are supported through the [Hawaii Teacher Induction Program](#) as well as all new pre-K teachers. Teachers are supported through a three-year comprehensive induction program for every beginning teacher, including two years of intensive mentoring.

#### **Integrated system.**

[Hawaii P-20 Partnerships for Education](#) (Hawaii P-20) is a statewide collaboration led by the EOEL, HIDEOE, and the University of Hawaii System with the goal of improving educational outcomes for Hawaii by strengthening the education pipeline from early childhood through higher education to achieve college and career success for all Hawai'i's students. Within Hawaii P-20 is the [Hawaii P-3 Initiative](#) that establishes partnerships with early learning providers to promote a cohesive continuum of experiences from birth to age eight and the [Hawaii Data eXchange Partnership](#), or Hawaii DXP (formerly called the P20W SLDS). Hawaii DXP is a statewide cross-agency, longitudinal data system that links information from infancy through early learning, K-12 and postsecondary education, and into the workforce. The HELDS are aligned with the pre-K formative assessment. Due to the inability of the state to fund educational community based organizations, building partnerships between the public and private sector are challenging.

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Executive Office on Early Learning [website](#).

Hawaii P-3 Initiative [website](#).



## Illinois Preschool for All

Calls for statewide education improvement were finally answered when the Illinois Prekindergarten Program for At-Risk Children was founded in 1985. The state Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) has provided funding for the program since 1998, along with coordinating services for at-risk infants and toddlers, offering parenting training, and supporting preschool education programs. The grant requires that at least 11 percent of its funding serves children age 3 or younger. The Preschool for All (PFA) initiative was created in 2006, with the goal of fully funding the program by 2012. The program began with the intention of offering preschool education to every 3- and 4-year-old in the state. Family child care homes, public schools, Head Start programs, and private child care and faith-based centers are all eligible to apply for competitive grants. The program is available in every county, though funding limitations do not allow every child whose families seek early learning to enroll. The ECBG, which provides state funding for both PFA 3-5 and the Prevention Initiative 0-3 programs, received level funding in 2013-2014, which represented an 8 percent cut from what programs had received in the 2011-2012 school year. Throughout the expansion phase of PFA, at-risk children have been the first funding priority.

At-risk status is determined locally, based on requirements identified by districts and agencies in their funding proposals. Low income (defined by federal FRP lunch criteria), low parent education levels, exposure to drug or alcohol abuse in the family, developmental delays, and a history of family neglect, violence or abuse all are considered risk factors. Families with an income up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level are given second priority to PFA funding. However, currently none of those programs serving the second priority have been funded, since there are still inadequate funds to serve all children in the first priority.

The program served 75,154 children in the 2014-2015 school year, which was 20 percent of the state's 3-year-olds and 27 percent of 4-year-olds.

Illinois meets 8 of the NIEER benchmarks, missing on Assistant teacher degree: Assistant teachers must have an AA or paraprofessional approval. They also do not meet the meal benchmark: School-day programs must provide lunch and snacks, but part-day programs are only required to provide snacks.

Illinois earned grants from federal Race to the Top and Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) competitions. This helped with implementing a Quality Rating and Improvement System, beginning in the 2013-2014 year, including all PFA programs, revising the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards to align them with Common Core State Standards and the Head Start Framework for the 2013-2014 school year, and implementing the KIDS assessment. In 2014, Illinois was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$20 million. The proposal included state matching funds both to expand the Preschool program for four years and to grow the entire system, expanding the Prevention Initiative Birth-to-3 and the PFA 3-5 programs, including offering full-day and comprehensive services to families in PI and PFA as well as the federal preschool expansion program.

In K-12 education, Illinois ranks above the US average for education spending, at \$12,288 per pupil in 2013, and scores slightly below national averages on math scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but exactly at the US average on reading scores.

Illinois has an 83.2 percent graduation rate, slightly higher than the US average. Illinois spends considerably more per pupil for public education expenditures than its neighboring states, Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Illinois is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, among the strongest.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 78.3 percent of age-eligible children in Illinois were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 70.5 were percent attending full-day programs.

**Essential Elements**

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Illinois’ program meets **nine** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	○	●	●	ND	○	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

**Rationale**

**Enabling Environment**

**Political will.** There is a Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development that has continued to grow under the new Governor, Bruce Rauner (R). The ECBG, which funds PFA, received an increase in funding which allowed Illinois to restore the cuts to programs that had been in effect for the past 3 years. The Child Care Assistance program however has been significantly reduced. The budget to fund school districts including PFA was signed. The operating budget for the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), however, was vetoed. There is currently no overall state budget and the state does not know when one will be approved.

Gov. Rauner is known as having a ‘pro-business’ agenda, calling it his turnaround agenda, which includes reducing the power of collective bargaining agencies. There was a 2.25 percent cut across all agencies in April 2015—for all of PFA programs as a result of an income tax that was allowed to expire in January 2015, right after the Governor came into office. In recent budget battles the House and Senate passed budgets for all of the agencies, and in June 2015 the Governor signed the budget for education to fund the schools—within that was ECBG for PFA, including an increase in the funding. It went back up from the 2.25 percent cut, with an additional \$14M, from \$300M down to \$293M until where it is now at \$314M.

All other budgets were vetoed, including the operating budget for the state board. Therefore, there are no funds for rent, electricity, facilities etc. The contract for monitoring programs is unpaid—they have a contract, but there is no

capacity to pay them, so they are working at their own risk. A variety of court orders were put in place to keep state employees being paid. An extremely dedicated staff is doing what they can do get to essential meetings and make sure they're moving the early childhood agenda forward—on their own dime. Initially, state programs could not spend any federal funds either, but they are now allowed to at least flow through federal dollars, such as IDEA part B funding.

Because of all the court orders and decisions agencies are spending money at a rate they are not bringing it in. It is unclear how long that can be maintained, and there are some suggestions that a budget will not be passed before next year.

Plans are underway to re-compete the ECBG for school year 2017-2018. With the current budget crisis in Illinois, it is not clear how much funding will be appropriated for the ECBG.

The Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC) includes public and private members. Philanthropy is at the table and supports early childhood initiative in a variety of ways. Higher Education is working on revising early childhood education teacher preparation programs.

The McCormick Foundation, the Irving Harris Foundation, and the Grand Victoria Foundation are funding ELC staffing. There is a group of funders in Chicago that get together around early childhood issues, and the Joyce Foundation has been funding KEA work.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Early Childhood Division at ISBE administers ECBG, IDEA Preschool Discretionary funds, the RTT-ELC grant, Preschool Development Grant/Expansion Grant, Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS, which is Illinois' KEA) and all of the grants and contracts associated with those funding sources. There are 9 professional staff, 2 support staff, and a Division Administrator in an agency of approximately 400 staff. They do not currently have an operating budget for the agency, because of the state budget issues; staff is paid through a court order but there are no funds for travel.

Cindy Zumwalt is the Early Childhood Division Administrator at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). She started work at the ISBE in 1990, moved to the Early Childhood Division in 2002, and became Early Childhood Division administrator on July 1, 2011.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** A BA is required for preschool teachers. Under the federally funded Illinois preschool expansion program teachers are required to have salary parity with their local kindergarten/primary teachers. The teachers in school-based PFA are generally in the union and on the same pay scale as the kindergarten/primary teachers but there is no requirement. For assistants to receive paraprofessional approval, in addition to holding a high school diploma or equivalent, an individual must have completed 60 semester hours of college credit at a regionally accredited institution of higher education, or pass either the ParaPro test offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) or Work Keys test offered by ACT with at least the score identified by the State Board of Education in consultation with the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board.

**Adult-child ratios.** Class size maximum is 20 children, ratios are 1:10 for 3- and 4-year-old classrooms.

**Learning time.** Programs are only required to offer 2.5 hours per day. Budget problems have made offering full day programs difficult. In 2014-2015, there were 28 programs that offered school-day sessions only, 24 programs

that offered both school-day and part-day sessions, and 406 programs that offered part-day sessions only. There is not a formal partnership but child care centers are one of the eligible recipients of PFA funding and provide wraparound services for the children in PFA who are also in their center.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Licensing requirements require at least two adults, within the ratios previously described.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The 2013 Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, are comprehensive and aligned with the Common Core State Standards. There is a Head Start Crosswalk that compares Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Domains and Elements with Illinois' ELDS.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state's Preschool for All program requires the use of a comprehensive research-based curriculum that is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Programs are required to indicate which curriculum they are using in their application and the use of the specified curriculum is checked during on-site monitoring.

Through ExceleRate Illinois, the state's QRIS, there is a Curriculum Crosswalk Application process to determine whether a curriculum is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for ages 3–5. If determined aligned, the curriculum is accepted by ExceleRate Illinois as evidence of program compliance for the curriculum indicator. The State of Illinois and its administering agencies (ISBE, IDHS, DCFS) do not approve or endorse, per se, any specific curriculum for implementation in any of its funded and/or regulated early childhood programs.

**Support for students with special needs.** The State of Illinois strongly encourages and promotes inclusion of all children in preschool programs. As part of their monitoring process, the Early Childhood Block Grant Preschool for All (PFA) 3-5 Compliance Checklist has an indicator to check whether special education supports and services are provided in the PFA classroom and embedded into the activities and routines of the day. The state has a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Stakeholders Consortium that meets four times a year and consists of multiple stakeholders. The focus of the group is to strengthen early childhood inclusion. Illinois has identified inclusion goals based on Indicator 6 data, and invites underperforming districts to a professional development session focusing on the planning process to moving the district towards offering a more inclusive environment.

As a part of ExceleRate Illinois, the state's QRIS, inclusion is an indicator under Teaching and Learning and gold level districts can work towards and apply for an Award of Excellence for Inclusion. The state also has several partnerships with technical assistance providers who train PFA staff on inclusive practices.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In Illinois, state Preschool programs administered by public school districts are required to offer a language instruction program to all children identified through a language proficiency screening process to be English Language Learners (ELLs). In attendance centers with 20 or more preschool ELLs of any single language classification other than English, a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program is provided, which includes instruction in the home language, English, and English as a second language (ESL) for each language classification represented by 20 or more students. In attendance centers with 19 or fewer preschool ELLs of any single language classification other than English, a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) is provided which includes ESL instruction and may include home language instruction or support. Full compliance will take effect on July 1, 2016. In the years leading up to this deadline, there have been various efforts to meet the demand for teachers qualified to teach in TBE and TPI programs, including grant funding, capacity building in Higher Ed programs, and creation of cohorts. ARRA and the RTT–ELC have provided funding for professional development

for Higher Ed to build knowledge and skills related to linguistic and cultural diversity and for the development of innovative practices to support linguistic and cultural diversity in their teacher preparation programs.

According to the [US Census Bureau](#), 22.3 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** A 2009 [observational evaluation](#) of PFA by Erikson and SRI found CLASS scores were 5.6 for emotional support, 5.2 for classroom organization, and 3.2 for instructional support. The CLASS scores are very similar to those in Tulsa, if somewhat lower for instructional support than might be desired. The average ECERS-R scores were 4.4 with only 25 percent scoring 5 or better. Chicago was not included in the study, however. Given the omission of Chicago, the discrepancy between ECERS-R and CLASS scores, and that the data are somewhat old, the quality of the current program cannot be determined.

**Child assessments.** The PFA program requires the use of a research-based, authentic assessment system that aligns with the curriculum and documents children's progress over time with measurable outcomes. Data gathered through portfolio collection and a developmental checklist, are used to inform lesson planning for individual children and the group. Compliance with the grant requires lesson planning that documents planning for individual children and the group, and that shows alignment with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** PFA programs are monitored on a 3-year cycle using the ECERS-R and a PFA compliance checklist. Programs are issued monitoring reports identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. Based upon the reports, a program is required to develop a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) that identifies action steps, resources to be utilized, targeted professional development, and a timeline for improvements. In each subsequent year until the program is monitored again, they are required to submit an annual update of progress on their CQIP.

Fall 2009-Winter 2012 was the last external evaluation of child outcomes and process quality in Illinois as previously described. During 2010-2011, a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Stakeholder Committee convened to provide recommendations to the ISBE on developing a comprehensive assessment procedure. The ISBE is implementing a comprehensive kindergarten assessment process that was piloted in the 2012-2013 school year. The second phase pilot implementation in 2013-2014 doubled the number of school districts participating. Statewide implementation is planned. The DRDP—School Readiness (DRDP-SR) is being adapted, piloted, field tested, and calibrated for the Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS).

**Professional development.** Professional development is aligned to the ECERS-R and the PFA compliance checklist and a variety of types of PD are offered, including face-to-face, webinars, and hybrid models. During the CQIP process, ISBE consultants recommend professional development that aligns with the needs identified on their program's monitoring reports.

Programs whose monitoring data suggests a need for additional support are enrolled in the PFA Coaching Project. PFA coaches are trained in relationship-based strategies to support quality and improved teaching practices. Coaches visit teachers monthly and use focused observation and data for needs assessment, plan with teachers to develop goals and action steps, provide ongoing feedback and reflective dialogue, and identify resources to support the goals. Throughout the process, coaches utilize a variety of strategies to support teacher improvement. Following two years of coaching, the program is re-monitored.

Through RTT-ELC funds, the Ounce of Prevention Fund has developed Lead.Learn.Excel., a professional development program to help center- and school-based leaders achieve instructional excellence in their early childhood classrooms. Programs may receive training on instructional leadership and organizational supports, including CLASS; technical assistance for leaders to apply knowledge, establish systems and change practice; peer learning and support by establishing a community of practice for leaders to reflect, examine their practice, learn from and with their peers; and resources and tools including protocols, job aids, guides and videos of effective leadership and teaching practices.

**Integrated system.** The state's QRIS system, ExceleRate Illinois identifies programs standards in four domains: Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement, Leadership and Management and Qualifications and Continuing Education. These standards are aligned with the state's ELDS, PFA selected curricula, and the child formative assessment.

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[Illinois Preschool for All Implementation Manual](#)





## Indiana

### On My Way Pre-K and the Early Education Matching Grant

There are two efforts underway to support pre-K children in Indiana, the Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) program and On My Way Pre-K. In EEMG, grants are awarded to providers statewide, who use the funds to enroll qualified children, while in the On My Way Pre-K program, families in the five pilot counties apply directly for scholarships. The maximum payment a family may receive for a full-day, full-year program in On My Way Pre-K is \$6,800.

In 2013, the Indiana Legislature set aside \$2 million to fund EEMG for the 2014 and 2015 state fiscal years, with the first programs receiving funds and initiating services in the fall of 2014. In 2014-2015, 30 programs were awarded \$1.4 million to provide EEMG pre-K services to 421 children at or below 100 percent of the FPL. EEMG requires that families maintain an 85% attendance rate or they are at risk of being asked to leave the program. In 2015-2016, enrollment increased to 540 children. All types of early learning programs, including licensed or registered programs and schools, can apply for a two-year grant, but a program must be rated at a Level 3 or Level 4 on Paths to QUALITY (PTQ), Indiana's QRIS, to receive funding.

The per-child state-funded grant amount for EEMG is \$3,400 for full-day and \$2,400 for part-day. There is not a maximum or minimum limit of how many children need to be served. In addition to the state funds, EEMG recipients are required to have a commitment for a matching donation from any combination of foundations, other nonprofit entities, individuals, or for-profit entities. The match must be a *cash* match only and have at least a 1:1 ratio (or 100%) of the award requested. An explanation of the amount and how the match will be provided for both years is required during the grant application process.

On My Way Pre-K was approved as a five-county pilot by the Indiana General Assembly in 2014. Indiana's pre-K efforts have not yet been reviewed in the NIEER Yearbook because it is a pilot program serving less than 1% of the state's 4-year-olds in 2014-2015. Indiana served 415 four-year-olds or roughly 0.5% of four-year-olds in its pre-K program.

In 2015-2016, approximately 2,300 four-year-olds living in families at or below 127 percent of the FPL attended a high-quality early childhood education programs, as defined through PTQ. Funding is a combination of state funding and funding through the city of Indianapolis. In the State Budget Agency's 2015 report it was announced that the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) was appropriating "\$10 million annually from the General Fund" for the Pre-K program.

On My Way Pre-K classrooms may be located in a public or private school, licensed child care center, licensed home or registered ministry as long as that program meets the quality requirements and is registered as an On My Way Pre-K provider. Families may choose from a program that is full- or part-day, as well as from programs that end with the school year or continue through the summer.

In K-12 education, 52 percent of fourth grade students in Indiana scored at or above proficient on the NAEP test in 2012-2013, the fourth-highest rate in the nation. Compared to three neighboring states (IL, MI, OH), Indiana had the largest share of fourth grade students scoring at or above proficient in math and reading, even though it had lower public school expenditures. Although Indiana was an early adopter of the Common Core State standards, Gov. Mike Pence (R) signed legislation in 2014 that made it one of the first states to drop Common Core. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions Indiana ranked 31st overall for union power and influence, or "average," which was in the third of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown*, reports 73.5 percent of age-eligible children in Indiana were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 73.9 were percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Indiana meets **five** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **six** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	–	–	●	●	○	○	○	–	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met ○ Partially Met – Not Met ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Pence was sworn into his first term in January 2013. In his [2014 State of the State address](#), he urged lawmakers to establish a voluntary preschool voucher program. Gov. Pence then personally [testified on HB 1004 \(2014\)](#), which would have established a framework to provide tuition support ranging from \$3,400 for a half-day program to \$6,800 for a school-day program for about 1,000 low-income 4-year-olds in five counties to attend preschool. “I’ve seen firsthand pre-K programs that work with disadvantaged kids to get them the help they need before they start school. We are indeed fortunate to have a broad range of public, faith-based and other private programs, all of which should be a part of our efforts to help give these children a better shot at success. That’s why I am so supportive of the voluntary pre-K scholarship program proposed in HB 1004... with great respect, I ask you to move this bill out of committee so that the Senate can continue consideration of this important measure.” The Indiana Senate Education Committee defeated it in a committee vote. When the bill all but appeared dead, Pence and leaders of the House and Senate resurrected the program with funding redirected from other state departments. The bill passed, and in 2015 the pre-K program began, along with a study of the parent satisfaction and the academic impact of the program on its participants. Preschool is also one of House Speaker Brian Bosma (R)’s top priorities.

Gov. Pence surprised early childhood advocates with his [decision](#) not to apply for the federal preschool development funds in 2014 which could have potentially brought the state \$80 million over four years. “While accepting federal grant dollars can at times be justified to advance our state's objectives, when it comes to early

childhood education, I believe Indiana must develop our own pre-K program for disadvantaged children without federal intrusion. We have made it clear from the beginning of our efforts to advance pre-K education that we must be vigilant as we design the program the Indiana way and avoid the pitfalls that too often accompany untested and unproven objectives in federal policy.” Gov. Pence is a strong believer in parental choice and flexible programs that are accountable. U.S. Senator [Joe Donnelly \(D\)](#), Indiana House minority leader Scott Pelath (D), and IN School Board member Dr. Brad Oliver were outspoken about Gov. Pence’s decision not to apply for the federal grant.

A similar preschool pilot program to On My Way Pre-K passed the House last year but was dismantled when it could not garner enough support in the Senate Education Committee. Committee members at the time expressed concerns about the cost and need for such a program, led by Committee Chairman [Dennis Kruse \(R\)](#).

As previously described, the 2015 Legislative budget session renewed On My Way Pre-K funding (\$10 million annually) and EEMG \$2.5 million for the following two years. Private philanthropy has been directly supporting On My Way Pre-K grants with the required matching funds including [Early Learning Indiana \(ELI, Dr. Ted Maple, Pres. and CEO\)](#), which committed \$150,00 and [United Way of Central Indiana \(UWCI\)](#), which committed \$100,000. Both are supported by the [Lilly Endowment Inc.](#) ELI has partnered with other advocates on such issues as increased accessibility and affordability of high-quality early childhood education for Indiana residents. The Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based, philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. In [2014](#), \$20 million was used to support Early Learning Indiana and \$2.5 million for UWCI’s early childhood work.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** On My Way Pre-K and EEMG are administered through The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) which is a division of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA). OECOSL runs PTQ, CCDF, and child care licensing. Melanie Brizzi has been the Director of OECOSL since 2009. She previously worked on PTQ and was the state’s Child Care Administrator. Nathan Williamson is the Director of Early Learning and Intervention, Indiana Department of Education.

OECOSL employs over 65 people, 5 work on PTQ, and another 2 on On My Way Pre-K and EEMG. There are also financial analysts and other staff who indirectly support Pre-K efforts. In addition, two Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) staff work with On My Way Pre-K and EEMG. IDOE has conducted training and TA sessions for pre-K providers, including public schools, on understanding the ways to access Title 1 and On My Way Pre-K funds to support more children or to extend program hours. IDOE updated its [preschool guidance](#) which includes possible scenarios of blending funds, such as braiding funds within the same schools, providing professional development or facility updates, increasing the quality of the program, etc.

Through [Indiana’s AEYC](#), higher education researchers and professors have been convening quarterly meetings to work on aligning coursework and other supports for Pre-K efforts.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Indiana requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA. In addition to a BA, coursework in early childhood education and child development is required. All teacher preparation programs consist of pedagogy coursework and a student teaching experience. Salary requirements are locally mandated and there may be salary parity with K-12 teachers, but it is not a requirement.

**Adult-child ratios.** According to the Child Care Center and Licensing rules, Indiana has a maximum class size of 24 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:12. These numbers do not meet the Essential Element limit of 22 children per class and are not within the adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** On My Way Pre-K requires a minimum of 450 hours and 114 days per program year (3.95 hours per week) and EEMG requires a minimum of 2.5 to 4.5 hours per day, 5 days per week and a minimum of 180 days per year. Programs are encouraged to supplement funds and offer extended hours, but only a part-day program is required.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Indiana’s pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 24 children per classroom with a ratio of 1 adult for every 12 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Indiana’s early learning standards, the Foundations, were developed in 2002 and last updated in 2015. The Foundations identify particular concepts or skills that serve as indicators as a child’s development progresses from birth to age five in eight different areas: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Emotional, Approaches to Play and Learning, Science, Social Studies, Creative Arts, and Physical Health and Growth. The Foundations are vertically aligned with the Indiana Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** As one of the requirements for meeting Level 3 in PTQ, classrooms in public schools must “implement a planned curriculum that addresses the stages of child development.” To support this implementation, the Foundations offer guidance promoted to be used to evaluate a curriculum’s strengths and weaknesses. The Classroom Planning Matrix was developed as a companion to the Foundations to help programs identify activities, resources and materials, and language supports. In the EEMG grant application, programs are asked to explain “your curriculum plan and list all of the curriculum that is used. Describe how your curriculum addresses your school readiness outcomes. Explain how the curriculum is connected to the Foundation standards.” The selection and implementation of the curricula in both EEMG and On My Way Pre-K is reviewed and monitored by the PTQ raters and supported through the PTQ coaches.

To support the use of the Foundations, a training module/webinar with materials was developed and is posted on IDOE’s Early Learning website.

**Support for students with special needs.** The latest revision of the Foundations, specifically addressed supporting the learning and development of two special populations, DLL and “exceptional learners.” Exceptional learners are defined as “children who enter the classroom with a range of developmental, language, behavioral, and medical needs.” Recommendations are made for preschool classrooms to be inclusionary and differentiate instruction for supporting children with special needs.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** According to the US Census, 8.2 percent of people age 5 years and older in Indiana speak a language other than English at home. Indiana has a formal process to identify children once they enter kindergarten, including a home language survey and an English language proficiency assessment. For children younger than kindergarten, Indiana has adopted the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards to be used in conjunction with the Foundations. As previously described, during the revision of the Foundations, supporting DLLs was a priority.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Dr. Michael Conn-Powers, the director of the Early Childhood Center at Indiana University Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, is conducting EEMG's evaluation, measuring child outcomes, teacher-child interactions, child development outcomes and family engagement activities. On CLASS, most EEMG teachers fell in the high range in their Emotional Support of children, with an average score of 5.64 (out of 7). EEMG classrooms teachers generally fell in the low range of CLASS Scores for the Instructional Support domain, with an average score of 2.32. "Classroom teacher interactions typically failed to ask questions and engage children in rich conversations that asked children to think deeply about ideas and connect them with what they already know and to their own experiences."

**Child assessments.** On My Way Pre-K providers and EEMG are required to administer the ISTAR-KR (Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting of Kindergarten Readiness) at least twice during the program year. The first assessment must be completed within six weeks of the child's start date and the last must be completed prior to the conclusion of the program year. Additional assessments through the program year are recommended in order to facilitate individualized student instruction, but not required.

ISTAR-KR is a web-based instrument that is used by teachers based on their ongoing observations of children (birth to kindergarten) engaged in typical daily routines and activities. It is designed to be used as a formative assessment. ISTAR-KR is available to all public schools in Indiana and to private early childhood education programs at no cost.

In 2006, a federally funded research study evaluated the reliability and validity of the ISTAR. The research study determined that ISTAR had high reliability and was effective at delineating children who demonstrated typical development from those challenged with reaching age-level skills. The research also identified improvement areas. Due to some structural issues and social/emotional items, the tool was revised to ISTAR-KR.

IDOE in collaboration with OECOSL has sponsored trainings on using ISTAR-KR as well as workshops on child assessments and individual lesson planning.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Both EEMG and On My Way Pre-K are required to have external evaluations, as previously described. As part of the On My Way Pre-K contract, programs agree to participate in research studies. This includes registering to be an administrator for ISTAR-KR (Indiana's KEA) and to participate in a longitudinal study by an external evaluator that includes classroom observations; completion of surveys; focus group participation; and student assessments. Results of the study are posted on OECOSL's website. EEMG's findings, as noted, showed EEMG children made significant gains in their receptive language (PPVT) concept development (BSRA), social competence (SCBE), and important school readiness skills (ISTAR-KR). The percentage of children showing developmental delays for each of these measures also decreased. At the start of the EEMG program year, 20 percent to 39 percent of the children showed delays in their receptive language (PPVT) and concept development (BSRA). These numbers were nearly halved by the end of the program (11% and 18%, respectively). In terms of classroom quality, Indiana's EEMG teachers scored above average in the area of Emotional Support, but slightly below average in Classroom Organization and Instructional Support on CLASS.

Both EEMG and On My Way Pre-K are required to be at level 3 or 4 in PTQ. If programs lose a level, it must be reported immediately to OECOSL. PTQ began as a pilot in 2000. In 2007, Purdue University was contracted to evaluate the implementation phase of PTQ. The evaluation study may have included programs that became pre-K providers, but that information is unknown. The average ECERS-R scores of the 90 preschool programs in PTQ between 2008 and 2011 were: Level 1 (3.8), Level 2 (34.0), Level 3 (4.4), and Level 4 (4.6). Level 4 preschool classrooms had an average global quality score of 4.6, but average scores ranged from 2.9 to 5.7 (on a 7.0 scale). The researchers found that when providers were rated higher on the Language/Reasoning scale of the ECERS-R, children displayed greater language ability.

Purdue is currently conducting a longitudinal evaluation of the children enrolled in On My Way Pre-K and will be tracking them through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Data are not yet available from this study. As previously mentioned, Dr. Michael Conn-Powers is conducting EEMG's evaluation, measuring child outcomes, teacher-child interactions, child development outcomes and family engagement activities. In his research, on average, a sample of 213 children in EEMG programs made positive significant gains in receptive language/vocabulary development, concept learning, social competence as measured by the PPVT-4, the Bracken School Readiness Assessment-3 (BSRA-3), and the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation-30 items (SCBE-30).

**Professional development.** In order to meet PTQ Level 3, at least 50 percent of the teaching staff must participate in a minimum of 20 clock hours of PD annually. OECOSL offers training opportunities, but the main support for teachers comes from contact with a PTQ coach. Programs typically receive monthly visits from one of the 65 PTQ coaches. Coaches are consultants based in one of the nine regional offices.

**Integrated system.** As previously noted, the Foundations were revised in 2012 to align with the ISTAR-KR assessment tool, the Indiana Academic Standards (2007), and the Common Core State Standards. *ISTAR-KR* is aligned to the Indiana Standards for kindergarten in the areas of English/Language Arts and Mathematics and includes three functional areas: physical, personal care, and social-emotional skills. Data from ISTAR-KR assessments are used for state reporting for pre-K students receiving special education as well as On My Way Pre-K and EEMG.

Participating in PTQ is a requirement for being an EEMG or On My Way Pre-K provider. PTQ standards align with licensing codes, require orientation on the Foundations, and identify teacher qualifications and ongoing PD.

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Conn-Powers, M., Herron, K., Reed Crawford, S. (2015). [Evaluation of Indiana's early education matching grant program: 2014-15](#). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

Lopez, A. (2015). [ELAC annual report 2015](#). IN: Early Learning Advisory Committee.

[On My Way Pre-K Home](#) official website





## Iowa

### Iowa Shared Visions and the Iowa Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP)

The state of Iowa funds two pre-K programs: Shared Visions (SV) and the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP). Shared Visions began in 1989 and provides services to 3- through 5-year-olds in school-, part-, and extended-day programs through competitive grants to public schools, Head Start, licensed nonprofit child care centers and other public nonprofit agencies. SVPP began in 2007 in order to increase the available pre-K slots for 4-year-olds. All 4-year-olds in the state are eligible to attend SVPP and funding is based on a school funding formula that is tied to the child count.

A key difference between the two state-funded programs is that eligibility for SVPP is based on age whereas SV is a targeted program—at least 80 percent of children must qualify for free lunch (family income of 130 FPL). SVPP is offered by almost 95 percent of school districts in Iowa whereas SV is only available in 9 percent of school districts in the state. SV is also available in 22 other locations such as Head Starts and licensed child care centers.

In 2014-2015, a total of 25,952 children were enrolled in the programs, representing 3 percent of 3-year-olds and 61 percent of 4-year-olds. Total state spending was \$77.5 million, or about \$2987 per child. In 2013-2014 per-child spending from all sources for SV was \$10,364.

SV meets 6 Benchmarks. It does not meet the teacher BA requirement. Teachers in nonpublic settings are required to have only an AA in ECE or CD. A small percentage of teachers in nonpublic settings may have a CDA provided they are working toward meeting the minimum requirement of an AA. In addition, SV does not meet the CDA requirement for assistant teachers, or the PD standard. Certified teachers employed in school district programs must renew their licenses every five years, including 6 credit hours of training. Head Start grantees must follow federal Head Start requirements of 15 hours of professional development per year. There is no specific requirement for the amount of in-service training for the remaining grantees, although the year-end report indicates all lead teachers have an average of 40 hours of staff development. The monitoring benchmark is also not reached.

For SVPP, 7 NIEER Benchmarks are met. They do not meet the assistant teacher standard, the meal requirement, or the teacher professional development standard. Assistant teachers should have either a CDA or an Iowa Paraeducator certificate. The certificate requires 90 hours of generalized education courses plus 45 hours of ECE-specific training and must be completed within a year. Assistants may be hired with only a high school diploma and must immediately enroll in a CDA program, but there is no timeline to obtain the CDA. SVPP does not meet the in-service benchmark either. State policy requires professional development but does not specify hours. Districts report the number of hours annually. The meal/snack policy is that a snack must be provided at least once a day, and additional meals must be provided if the program is longer than 10 hours per week.

In K-12 education, Iowa ranks slightly below the US average for education spending, at \$10,313 per pupil in 2013, but slightly above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and an 89.7 percent graduation rate, which is higher than the US average. Iowa reported higher public education expenditures per child than neighboring state Missouri, but less than Illinois and Minnesota, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Iowa is ranked 27<sup>th</sup> for strength of teacher union, or about average.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 78.1 percent of age-eligible children in Iowa were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 89.6 were percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Iowa’s SV program meets **five** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** elements. Iowa’s SVPP program meets **five** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **four** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

## Shared Visions

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	–	–	●	–	●	●	–	○	○	ND	●	●	–	○

## Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP)

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	–	●	●	–	●	●	–	○	○	ND	●	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** At the beginning of Gov. Terry E. Branstad (R)’s tenure in the state in 1998, there was a move to change UPK to be more needs-based or targeted. [Collaborating for Iowa’s Kids](#)—a structure for collaboration among state department, Area Education Agency (AEA) regional units and local school districts to partner for Iowa’s kids—emerged from this effort as well. Gov. Branstad’s [2016 State](#) address included more than \$145 million in new funding for pre-K through 12th grade students and teachers.

Iowa’s pre-K programs saw a 3 percent increase in state funding and an increase of \$92 per child adjusted for inflation in 2014-2015. However, the state’s pre-K spending ranks 35th out of 42 states and DC that offer pre-K. Over the last five years SV experienced two decreases in funding during the 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 program years. However, the 2013-2014 program year saw a 17.9 percent increase in funding, and even though there was

not a state funding increase from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 there was a \$5.7 million increased in a required local match. Funding per child remains well below its level in 2012.

Iowa has several bills that are still alive that related to pre-K: HB 2294 (2016) relates to providing prekindergarten services using innovative financing partnership contracts; SB 2009 (2016) expands the statewide preschool program for 4-year-olds to also include 5-year-olds who have not previously enrolled in a preschool program under that code chapter.

Early Childhood Iowa advocates for early childhood issues from birth through age 5 has provided some strong support for pre-K issues.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Iowa State Department of Education (DOE) oversees SV and SVPP within the Bureau of Educator Quality under the Division of Learning and Results. There are two designated staff members in the DOE who oversee pre-K efforts. There are other staff members who support pre-K, but have other responsibilities, such as IDEA staff. A few years ago, there was a division reorganization and people within early childhood were dispersed into other Bureaus or Divisions within DOE, but they continue to do some pre-K work.

Area Education Agency 267 (AEA 267) is one of nine AEAs created in 1974 by the Iowa legislature to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children from birth through age 21. AEA 267 provides supports to educators and parents of children aged birth to 21 in the areas of quality instructional materials, curriculum planning, best practices in teaching and learning, safe and caring learning environment, appropriate educational opportunities for all learners, technology planning, professional learning, assessment, special education, and leadership development. Each of the SV grantees has a designated AEA contact person based on the program's geographic location.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Teachers in the SVPP program are required to have at least a BA degree with an Iowa teaching license and the early childhood endorsement. Lead and assistant teachers in the SVPP program who work in public school settings are required to be paid on the same salary schedule and receive the same fringe benefits as K-3 teachers.

Teachers in SV are required to have at least a BA degree if they work in a public school. In nonpublic settings, 75 percent of teachers are required to have a BA and the remainder are required to have at least an AA degree. All teachers in both programs are required to have specialized training in ECE. SV teachers are not required to be paid on par with K-3 public school teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Both SV and SVPP programs meet the "exemplar" criteria for ratio and class size, with 1:8 ratios for 3- and 4-year-olds in SV, (1:9 for 3s and 1:10 for 4s in SVPP) and maximum class sizes of 18 for 3-year-olds and 20 for 4-year-olds in both programs. Mixed classrooms with 3- and 4-year-olds must not exceed the maximum group size of 18.

**Learning time.** Hours of operation are determined locally for SV, and in the 2011-2012 school year, SV programs blended with SVPP and Head Start programs to increase hours to meet the needs of children and families, during the academic year.

SVPP funds may be used to provide school- or extended-day programs if the program adds at least 10 hours of instruction by an early childhood endorsed teacher, and the program meets NAEYC standards. For SVPP, most districts provide 12 hours per week, and operate 3-4 days per week. Programs operate at least 3 days per week, and many operate 4-5 days per week.

**Two adults in the classroom.** According to state [FAQs](#), “A minimum of one staff member and one teacher shall be present when 11 to 20 four-year-old children are present.”

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [Iowa Early Learning Standards](#), were developed in 2007. Iowa added mathematics and science, as well as social studies, in 2012. They are aligned with Iowa Core, Iowa’s College and Career Ready Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The Iowa DOE does not endorse any one preschool curriculum, however information is available on the website for Creative Curriculum and High Scope. SVPP [guidance](#) states that all programs are not required to use the same curriculum, but it must be an “evidence-based written framework that is comprehensive, addresses the needs of the whole child, and provides a guide for decision making about content, instructional methods, and assessment.”

**Support for children with special needs.** There are some formal policies around serving children with special needs. Under IDEA, the state collects data about least restrictive environment, and the state has been effective over the last 8-10 years in sharing data and information with regional units and local school districts. Having conversations around the data has been important. The state is focusing on the recently released national inclusion statement, and will use those tenets to guide policy and feedback to schools about integration efforts. The Special Education Advisory Panel has worked with the State Plan to set rigorous targets for inclusion.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Both SV and SVPP require the identification of potential English Language Learners (ELLs) through home language surveys. Additional supports to ELLs are provided by both SV and SVPP as guided by selected program standards. Some of these services may include making translators or bilingual staff available if children do not speak English, requiring a written plan on how to work with individual ELLs, screening and assessing children in their home language, providing information to families in their home languages, allowing bilingual instruction in the child’s home language, and providing recruitment and outreach information to families in their home languages. The State Early Learning Standards cover cultural awareness and teacher professional development is supported through the Iowa Culture and Language Conference.

According to the [US Census Bureau](#), 7.2 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Statewide data on CLASS or ECERS-R are not available.

**Child assessments.** In the spring of 2011, Iowa began providing GOLD assessment training and required all grantees in Shared Visions to implement TS GOLD online three times a year. The state DOE allocates a unique child identification number to each child in the SV program, as of 2011, to enhance data collection and analysis. In 2013 state law required all preschool age children enrolled in a district sponsored or SVPP program to be assessed using TS GOLD. The Iowa TS GOLD license allows any Iowa program to participate in TS GOLD at a reduced cost.

The state has been doing some work with collaborative partners on TS GOLD, looking at as part of monitoring for program standards, degree of implementation, and how they are individualizing instruction and sharing with families.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** All SV programs are required to be NAEYC accredited. New programs not currently accredited must attain accreditation during their second year of funding. Programs that do not attain accreditation during year two and do not receive a waiver are not funded for renewal. If a program is unable to maintain accreditation and do not receive a waiver will not be continues to be funded.

SVPP programs do not have to be NAEYC accredited, but need to adopt a set of program standards: NAEYC, the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS), or the Head Start Performance Standards. Quality Verification visits are conducted in the second year of program implementation. These visits are intended to identify continuous improvement strategies, recommendations for improvement and challenges and programs are expected to address them in the following year.

A state-mandated evaluation of SV was completed in 2008. The American Institute of Research completed a formal evaluation of the first cohort of SVPP participants in 2012-2013 and the Iowa DOE completed a special report on the second SVPP cohort in 2013-2014.

**Professional development.** State policy requires professional development for SVPP but does not specify hours. Districts report the number of hours annually, with SVPP teachers having 15 clock hours of professional development in the 2014-2015 year.

SV certified teachers employed in school district programs must renew their licenses every 5 years, including six credit hours of professional development. In addition, Head Start grantees must follow federal Head Start requirements of 15 hours of professional development per year. There is no specific requirement for the amount of in-service training for the remaining grantees, although the year-end report indicates lead teachers have an average of 40 hours of staff development. Based on NAEYC accreditation standards, all new employees are required to have training to introduce them to program information, including interaction with the children and curriculum. Another NAEYC Accreditation Standard states that programs will have a professional development plan in place covering a variety of training areas for all staff. In addition, assistant teachers participate in professional development, as determined at the local level, to enhance the program objectives and child progress.

There is also a teacher leadership and compensation effort going on. Funding is not generated based on the 4-year-old preschool count, so the law is permissive in allowing those teachers to be included. The state is working on mentoring teachers, connecting teachers in school building to teacher leaders in K-6. Districts are using peer learning communities and including pre-K teachers in them.

**Integrated system.** All children enrolled in SVPP and SV are given a unique state identification number as part of the state longitudinal data system. Iowa has a set of early program standards, however it is not required to be used, but is one of three choices including NAYEC program standards or the Head Start Performance Standards. This choice makes it difficult to align an early childhood system. There are some common components required by both pre-K programs including the use of TS GOLD.

There is an Early Childhood Iowa strategic plan for reaching the visions that “Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.”

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## Resources

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[Iowa Early Learning Standards](#)

[Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children Frequently Asked Questions Updated 2014-2015](#)

[FY16 Shared Visions Preschool Application FAQs](#).



## Kansas

### Kansas Preschool Program & State Prekindergarten Program

Kansas has two state-funded preschool programs, the Kansas State Prekindergarten Program (KSPP) established in 1998, and the Kansas Preschool Program (KPP), which started in the 2006-2007 school year. KSPP is available to 4-year-olds who meet one of eight state-determined risk factors: eligibility for free lunch (130 percent FPL), academic or developmental delay based upon validated assessments, English Language Learner status, migrant status, a parent lacking a high school diploma or GED, having a single parent, having a teen parent, or having a referral from the Department for Children and Families agency.

KPP requires that at least 50 percent of the children enrolled must meet either one of the program risk factors listed above or one of the alternate risk factors; alternate factors include being referred by an early childhood organization, qualifying for reduced price lunch (185% percent FPL), or having a parent on active military duty. The other half must be eligible according to standards set by local programs.

The programs enroll about 20 percent of the population. KSPP is the larger preschool program, enrolling 8,134 students in 2014-2015, while the KPP enrolled 1,074 children.

KPP and KSPP are funded differently. The KSPP provides funding to public schools directly, with school districts receiving 50 percent of the Base Student Aid per pupil under the state's K-12 funding formula. The KPP is funded through tobacco dollars. Grants can also be awarded to school districts, nonprofit community partnerships or community agencies on behalf of a coalition of service providers.

Both of Kansas's preschool programs meet 6 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks. Teachers and assistant teachers in Kansas are required to have degrees (BA and CDA respectively) but they are not required to have any early childhood specialized training. Additionally, neither program requires outside monitoring nor site visits, though teachers are required to complete classroom surveys.

In the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data, Kansas had the highest share of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who scored at or above proficient in math in comparison with neighboring states Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Fourth and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Kansas also scored above the national average in reading proficiency. On average Kansas spent \$9,828 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 28th highest in the nation in fiscal year 2013. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher union ranked Kansas 32nd overall for union power and influence, or "weak."

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 77.9 percent of age-eligible children in Kansas were enrolled in Kindergarten, attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014).



Both Kansas' state preschool programs meet **five** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meet **three** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

### Kansas Preschool Program

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	○	–	●	–	●	●	–	●	●	ND	–	○	○	–

### Kansas State Prekindergarten Program

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
–	○	–	●	–	●	●	–	●	●	ND	–	○	○	–

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

### Rationale

#### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Kansas does not have many state-level politicians supporting preschool and early childhood programs. Former Governor Kathleen Sebelius (D) was a supporter of universal preschool, and was known across the country as a champion for preschool programs. Governor Sam Brownback®, who assumed office in 2011, has supported full-day kindergarten and withheld support for the state application for the federal Preschool Development Grant. The Governor's 2017 budget does not appear to reduce pre-K funding, but transfers \$57.3 million from the Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) fund to the state general fund that would be allocated to early childhood initiatives recommend by the Children's Cabinet. The Governor says the transfer is intended to increase accountability and consolidate early childhood programs in the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE). Child advocacy groups are concerned that this structure would not protect funding for children's programs overtime.

The 1999 Legislative session created the Kansas Children's Cabinet to oversee expenditures from the Master Tobacco Settlement. Their task is to advise the Governor and the legislature regarding the uses of money credited to the Children's Initiative Fund and assist the Governor in developing and implementing delivery systems to serve children and families in Kansas. Cabinet members are appointed by the Governor and Legislative leadership.

Kansas works with The Alliance for Early Success to advance state policies in health, family, and support for early learning. The Alliance works with Kansas Action for Children to improve access to high quality early childhood programs and services, a nonprofit organization with the goal of improving the lives of children in Kansas.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Division of Learning Services (Brad Neuenswander, Deputy Commissioner), housed in KSDE, has four "teams," including the Early Childhood, Special Education and Title

Services (ECEST). ECEST (Colleen Riley, Team Director) is charged with providing effective, evidence-based technical assistance to districts and schools across the state, serving students from early childhood through secondary school. Members of the Early Childhood team have responsibilities including coordinating the many early childhood programs, including pre-K, located in KSDE, providing Technical Assistance to early childhood personnel in programs across the state, and participating in meetings, coordinating councils, and conferences that occur across Kansas. Early childhood is defined as the continuum of birth to age eight (3rd grade).

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Kansas requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA, however Kansas pre-K teachers do not have salary parity with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Kansas has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** Both Kansas programs have operating schedules that are determined locally. However, programs must provide 465 hours per year of education. Most programs are approximately 3 hours per day, 5 days per week. This is less than the Essential Element criteria of 6 hours per day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** A lead teacher and assistant teacher are present at all times during the education program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Kansas Early Learning Standards were revised in 2014, the third revision since first completed in 2006. The current work focuses on updating the standards based on new knowledge and research and the need to align with K-12 College and Career Ready Standards. In 2013, Kansas joined 10 other states, CCSSO, WestEd, and Understanding Language, to correlate English Language Proficiency Standards with College and Career Ready standards for English Language Arts and Literacy, Math, and Science to create the ELPA21 Standards Initiative.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Kansas does not have a statewide curriculum for any grade level. The core curriculum used in each program must be aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards and must be evidence-based. It is the task of the teacher and leadership team to implement a curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** Eight percent of children in Kansas are enrolled in special education preschool programs. Under Section 619 of Part B of IDEA, preschool children who have disabilities are entitled to Special Education and related services in the least restrictive environment. The Special Education Services team provides leadership and support for learners receiving special education services.

Children who have IEPs may be in KPP classrooms participating in the program but their status is unknown. Some programs may include students with IEPs in their enrollment counts, but there is no state policy requiring this. When programs apply for KPP funding, they need to describe how the programs will support children who have identified special needs.

KSPSP children with IEPs who meet at least one of the first seven at-risk criteria must be considered for participation and cannot be excluded solely because they have an IEP.

**Support for dual language learners.** DLL services are made available to students who have a first language that is not English or have a language other than English at home. The DLL state funding program is designed to help offset the cost Kansas school districts incur in their efforts to educate these students. DLL students are tracked using Individual Learning Plans (ILP) to monitor whether goals are being met. Kansas adopted English Language Proficiency Standards to ensure English language learners are meeting college- and-career ready standards in academic subject areas. In addition to standards, home language surveys and parent notification letters are required to be sent in the child's first language. Professional development is offered to teachers who work with DLLs.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS and ECERS observations of pre-K classrooms were not available for review.

**Child assessments.** There is no mandated design list of formative assessments for pre-K, nor are programs required to assess students. Programs may choose to use the Kansas Early Learning Inventory-4 (KELI-4), however it is required to be used at the state level on a random selection of students and is not recommended to use at the program level because not all children are assessed

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Both Kansas preschool programs use data to identify needs that guide teacher training and professional development. In KPP, data collected through KELI-4 and classroom surveys inform funding decisions about programs or grantees and can inform policy changes regarding the state preschool program. KELI-4 uses a random sample of 10 children from each classroom. Programs also participate in classroom-level self-assessment using the Classroom Practices Survey. Classroom surveys are self-reported and child data are collected by teachers using observation and other valid assessments. An evaluation of KPP will be available at [www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org) in early 2016.

**Professional development.** Staff development rubrics for district/school assessments are used to determine where districts may need to target professional development. Once levels are determined, professional development plans are created based on individual, building, or district focuses. There is not a state coordinated system of coaching.

**Integrated system.** Some of Kansas' pre-K elements are aligned, such as the Kansas' ELDS and self-selected curriculum. KPP has a set of program standards that are based on the Kansas Preschool Program Model which is "a data-based, research-informed model, focused on implementing assessment, curriculum and instruction practices that are supported by evidence and, when implemented with fidelity, prevent later academic and behavioral challenges in the elementary and secondary educational years." There are four components: community collaboration, family engagement, high quality early learning experiences, and successful children and include how to best use the KELI-4 and Kansas Early Learning Standards. KSPP has a different set of program standards but they also include the use of KELI-4 and the Kansas Early Learning Standards.

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Kansas Preschool Program](#) website.



## Kentucky

### Kentucky Preschool Program

The Kentucky Preschool Program (KPP) was launched in 1990, in response to the [Kentucky Education Reform Act](#). The program is available to 4-year-olds from low-income families as well as 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities. In the 2014-2015 school year, 18,716 eligible children were enrolled, representing a slight decline in the past three years. This reduction in enrollment is attributed to a more precise child count data system and a change in age eligibility. As a result of HB235 (2014), children must now be four years old as of August 1 of that school year to be eligible; previously they had to be four years old by October 1. Children who do not meet state eligibility requirements may participate based on space availability, though they are funded by district money or tuition rather than state dollars. In 2014-2015, \$71.7 million in state funds were used to support KPP, which will be increasing by \$18 million in 2015-2016.

The KPP distributes money to local school districts according to a funding formula. School districts may subcontract with private child care centers, Head Start programs, and special education providers, to offer preschool services. In 2014-2015, state spending per child was \$3,835, an increase of 9 percent from the previous year (inflation-adjusted).

KPP meets nine of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, missing the benchmark for assistant teacher degree. Assistant teachers in KPP are only required to have a high school diploma, or equivalent.

Kentucky was one of five states funded in the third round of federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge in 2013. The \$44.3 million federal grant is being used to expand and enhance the quality rating system (STARS). All early childhood programs that receive public funds, including KPP, must participate in STARS. In 2015, Kentucky was awarded \$6.7 million in the sixth round of the federal Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Grant program to expand access to timely, high-quality education and workforce data.

In K-12 education, Kentucky ranks 35<sup>th</sup> for education spending, \$9,316 per pupil in 2013. Nevertheless, Kentucky's graduation rate is above average at 86.1 percent and NAEP test scores are at or above the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Kentucky was the first state to implement the Common Core state standards, but withdrew from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) testing consortium, citing limited resources, public confusion about PARCC, and the legal requirement for an unbiased competitive bidding process for securing the contract. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions Kentucky ranked 28<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "average."

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 78.4 percent of age-eligible children in Kentucky were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those 84.3 were percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Kentucky Preschool Program meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **seven** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	○	●	–	●	●	–	●	○	○	●	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** In 2010, The Governor’s Task Force on Early Childhood Development and Education established Kentucky’s definition for school readiness that meets the interests and needs of all children, families, and communities. It defined school readiness to “mean each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success,” providing a compelling vision for future work.

Strong political will has been historically evident from the Governor’s Office through the legislature. Gov. Steve Beshear (D), a proponent of early education, convened a Task Force on Transforming Education in Kentucky (TFTEK) in 2009, including a Task Force on Early Childhood Development & Education. The Task Force’s Breaking New Ground report (2011) highlighted early education, with recommendations to expand preschool opportunities and improve transitions between preschool and K-12, including: provide sufficient funding in the state budget to improve access to effective, high-quality pre-K programs; require collaboration among state-funded preschool, Head Start, and child care; and provide full state funding for all-day kindergarten.

In 2011, Gov. Beshear was named America’s Greatest Education Governor by the National Education Association and was credited with supporting high quality preschool as evident by the creation of the Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Governor’s Office on Early Childhood. Legislation followed, that supported the governing structure (HB184, 2013) and the requirement that all programs that receive public funds must participate in the quality rating system (HB234, 2014). Support from the legislature has been solid over time. The legislature recently allocated an additional \$19M by raising the income eligibility for KPP from 150% to 160% with one estimate that 5,000 more children will be served. Others in the legislature have called for raising the limit to 175% FPL.

Gov. Beshear’s term expired in January 2016 and was replaced by Matt Bevin (R) who is not seen as supportive of pre-K. During his campaign for governor, he questioned the state’s participation in federal preschool programs, citing a federal study showing the benefits were inconsequential once a child got beyond third grade but he is also quoted as saying “early childhood education is critical.” The final state budget expanded eligibility for public preschool to families making less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. It is too early to determine how pre-K will be affected under Gov. Bevin’s leadership.

There are many supporters throughout the state, notably the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Newly appointed ED Brigit Ramsey is a vocal proponent of pre-K and served previously on the state Board of Education. Prichard's Strong Start KY advocates for high quality pre-K available for every Kentucky child. The Kentucky Education Action Team (KEAT), a coalition of seven of Kentucky's education advocacy organizations also provides an active pre-K presence.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) continues to provide strong leadership for early education. New Education Commissioner Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt, coming from Atlanta, is expected to continue providing support and leadership for advancing early education. His primary experience is in science education, working on developing the Next Generation Science Standards, and he emphasizes collaboration and building relationships in order to ensure every child is prepared for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Associate Commissioner Dr. Amanda Ellis was instrumental in the development of the superintendent's toolbox, a resource guide for superintendents and district leaders working with families, early childhood providers, and community partners to increase school readiness. School Readiness Branch Manager Sally Shepherd leads KDE's early learning strategy work, a cornerstone of the Next Generation Learners Delivery Plan designed to increase the number of children entering public school kindergarten ready and progress to proficiency in math and reading by end of third grade. The state Board of Education is investigating the impact of raising pre-K eligibility to 175% and 200% of the FPL.

The Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood (Terry Tolan, Exec. Dir.) worked with former state superintendents Drs. Floyd and Holiday to reform KY's early education system in line with KERA. Terry Tolan has been a member of the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) of the Southern Regional Education Board.

With leadership from the Governor's office and the Prichard Committee, business leaders have played important roles when developing strategies to support early education. PNC Bank and Toyota have been noted for their leadership and investments as well as the Hagar Foundation and CENS (Louisville). United Way representatives have been active in various initiatives and Governor-appointed committees. Support from the Prichard Foundation and several national groups in the past (e.g., Pew, Annie E. Casey, Kellogg) has been appreciated. However, one source described Kentucky as "philanthropically anemic."

The University of Kentucky provides leadership to P-20 education, especially in its Educational Leadership Studies program. Prof. Beth Rous is a nationally recognized leader, expert, and advocate in early childhood systems, leadership, and special education. Her research is currently focusing on development of measures of quality and cross sector systems.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Kentucky requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an interdisciplinary early childhood education certification. There is an exception for lead teachers hired prior to 2004-2005, who can hold a CDA or an AA in child development. These teachers are allowed to remain in their current positions but may not transfer to other districts.

Lead teachers in public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules, but there is no requirement for lead teachers in nonpublic schools. Assistant teachers in both public and nonpublic settings are required to have a high school degree or equivalent. Assistant teachers in public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules, with no compensation requirements for those in nonpublic schools.



**Adult-child ratios.** Kentucky has a maximum class size of 20 for 3- and 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

**Learning time.** Children attend KPP four or five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 2.5 hours per day with additional time for a meal, less than Essential Element criterion of 6 hours per day. Districts have the option of extending the school day by other district funds. In 2013-2014, 69 districts operated on a school-day schedule of more than 4 hours a day, 97 districts operated on a part-day schedule, and 7 districts offered both school- and part-day schedules. KDE was not able to determine the total number of children in each schedule.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization (or grandfathered at lower level) and an assistant teacher are present at all times during the 2.5 hour education program in KPP classrooms. As indicated previously, itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Kentucky Early Childhood Standards (KYECS) were first developed in 2003. The comprehensive KYECS for Birth-3 and 3-4 were revised in 2009 and 2013 by a team of interdisciplinary early childhood educators. In 2011, efforts began to reinforce district capacity to understand and implement KYECS and support school readiness. The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) has been working with the Kentucky Educational Television, a division of PBS, to develop a basic series of online training that will be on the KYECS.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** There is no approved list of curriculum models. It is reported that most programs use the Creative Curriculum. Teachers receive embedded classroom observation and support through regional training centers, however the content varies by location.

**Support for students with special needs.** School districts are required to provide instruction to children with disabilities based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Kentucky special education regulations (707 KAR 1:002- 1:380). Support for students with special needs is strong. Through the Kentucky System of Intervention (KSI), a variation of Response to Intervention (RtI) helps identify children with special needs who can be enrolled at age 3 for KPP. More than 9,600 children received specialized services in inclusive KPP classrooms. There are very few segregated classrooms.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Regulations stipulate that the curriculum “is relevant and reflective of the needs of the population served (such as, bilingual or bicultural, multicultural, rural, urban, or migrant)” and has “staff and program resources reflective of the racial and ethnic population of the children in the program.” While the state reports it does not regulate ELL services for KPP, translators or bilingual staff are available in districts. Kentucky is exploring ways to integrate WIDA standards into the early learning standards. Some materials for parents are translated into Spanish, such as letters informing parents about higher quality Preschools of Excellence. ELLs account for 3 percent of the state’s population. Some places, like Bowling Green, with higher concentrations provide ELL services. ELL funding starts at kindergarten.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Kentucky promotes strong teacher-child interactions using ECERS and ELLCO to measure quality of instruction but the state does not have a comprehensive method for collecting and analyzing data statewide. Head Start blended classes use CLASS and ECERS. ELLCO is used by classrooms of excellence. The Early

Learning Leadership Networks (ELLN) incorporated ELLCO w/ all teachers getting training and support. Teaching staff will be trained in ECERS-3 next year, which focuses more heavily on teacher-child interaction.

Some data are available on actual performance. A formal, third-party longitudinal evaluation was completed by the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville in 2014 as part of a state-wide evaluation of the star rating system. The sample of KPP classrooms was quite small: 20 classrooms. Nevertheless, CLASS scores were in the low to mid-range for Instructional Support (M=2.55) and in the mid-range for Emotional Support (M=5.5) and Classroom Organization (M=4.94). A NIEER study conducted on 47 classrooms several years ago found similar CLASS scores: for Instructional Support (M=3.1), Emotional Support (M=5.4), and Classroom Organization (M=4.7). Average ECERS-R in the NIEER study was 4.26.

**Child assessments.** Formative assessment is inherent in KPP practice and policy. Districts may choose one of the approved assessment tools in the Kentucky Continuous Assessment Guide, which includes AEPS, LAP-3, TS GOLD (most frequently used), Child Observation Record (COR), and Work Sampling System (WSS). In addition, Kentucky's Kindergarten entry screener uses the BRIGANCE Early Childhood Kindergarten Screen III. The state collects information for state and local reports, and provides training and support on formative assessment through the regional early childhood training centers. State regulations require that teachers have dedicated planning time to ensure curriculum planning responsive to children's developmental status.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Kentucky's use of kindergarten entry data informs state and local decisions about improving the quality of early education. In 2014-2015, 50 percent of kindergartners were considered "ready" with significant variation among subgroups (i.e. 29 percent of Hispanic children were ready). Combining this information with data from child assessment, ECERS scores, and Peer-to-Peer Reviews (P2PR), a data package enables multiple data points to be analyzed for program improvement. No external statewide evaluation of KPP has been released.

The Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS) produces county Early Childhood Profiles to help community leaders, Community Early Childhood Councils, and school districts with data to assist in developing local strategies for improving school readiness. Reports include information about the quality and availability of child care, results from the 2014 statewide kindergarten screener, and information about participation in publicly funded preschool, Head Start, and child care. Finally, demographic data, participation in public health and social service programs, and key indicators of possible obstacles to success for young children and their families are also included on the profiles.

The KDE has been identifying high-quality, KPP classrooms as Classrooms of Excellence, a practice that began in 2006-2007 school year. Program quality is also monitored through the statewide Preschool Program Review (P2R) process, which began in 2011-2012. The P2R requires district self-evaluation of the preschool standards through an online survey, completion of an ECERS-R for every classroom, and site visits at least once every 5 years to observe classrooms at every site. To ensure that program quality assessment for the P2R process is reliable, the Early Childhood Regional Training Centers (RTCs) collaborate with KDE staff. RTCs also offer technical assistance before and after ECERS-R observations. In addition to P2R, KPP programs in 14 school districts participated in statewide consolidated monitoring process of state and federal programs in 2013-2014.

As previously noted, the most recent formal, third-party longitudinal evaluation was completed by the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville in 2014 as part of a state-wide evaluation of the star rating system. The sample included 20 KPP classrooms.

**Professional development.** Kentucky has developed a statewide system of professional development to support KPP. Beyond the 18 hour minimum of professional development teachers are required to receive annually, educators are offered training, on-site consultation, and others services through Early Childhood Regional Training Centers and Early Learning Leadership Networks (ELLN). Professional Development hours are approved by KDE and the district to ensure quality. To support new teachers, the state recently published a Preschool New Teacher Orientation Manual and training. New Coordinator training sessions are also held.

**Integrated system.** The Kentucky Early Childhood Data System (KEDS) assists early childhood programs in reporting children's progress towards meeting the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards and the Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) Child Outcomes, while using recommended practices for the authentic assessment of young children. Given the high percentage of children with special needs in KPP, the integrated system is designed as a “universal design” model with application for all students across different programs.

An integrated P-12 data management system continued to be developed in 2013-2014, to align program and child outcome data from KPP, Head Start, and child care with the K-12 system as part of the Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant.

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## Resources

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Grisham-Brown, J., Grivil, M., Danner, F., & McCormick, K. (2015). [Early care & education evaluation final report: 2012-2014](#). Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky.

Kentucky Department of Education- Preschool/Primary <http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/prim-pre/Pages/default.aspx>

[Seeding Kentucky's Future: Early Childhood Advisory Council Biannual Report](#)



## Louisiana

### Pre-K in Louisiana

As a result of legislation, Louisiana is unifying all publicly funded early childhood programs (school-based pre-K, Head Start, and child care) through an integrated system of shared standards, teacher support, accountability and enrollment. For this reason we provide a single rating of Louisiana on the 15 essential elements even though it has three pre-K programs (one of them serves the vast majority of children). With the goal of preparing all children for kindergarten, this effort seeks to ensure quality teacher-child interactions and instruction in all pre-K programs, regardless of setting, as well as enable the family of every at-risk 4-year-old to choose a quality pre-K option.

Since 1988, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) has had a goal of ensuring “children will enter kindergarten ready to learn.” At that time, Louisiana supported its first state-funded pre-K initiative, the Model Early Childhood Program (MECP). This initiative ended in 1993 when matching annual appropriations for the program were discontinued. Some local school districts began using the 8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program to offer preschool programs to at-risk 4-year-olds in place of MECP. In the 2014-2015 school year, 66 of 70 districts were using the 8(g) block grants, providing prekindergarten programs to 2,261 children. Enrollment priority is given to children from low-income families; children are qualified for the program if they are at risk of being “insufficiently ready for the regular school program.”

Louisiana supports two other state-funded school-day preschool programs in addition to the 8(g) program. Louisiana’s largest pre-K program, The Cecil J. Picard LA4 Early Childhood Program (formerly LA4 and Starting Points) was established in 2001. In the 2014-2015 school year, 16,171 four-year-olds were enrolled. The LA4 program serves children in public schools, charter schools, and one tribal school.

Also established in 2001, the Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development program (NSECD) reimburses preschool tuition for enrolled children from families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. With the unification of Louisiana’s preschool programs, preschool tuition is now reimbursed for families at 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Programs operate in 16 parishes throughout the state, though all parishes have the opportunity to participate. NSECD served 1,283 children in 2014. Combined, Louisiana programs served a total of 19,871 4-year-olds, 32 percent of the state’s population. In addition, 7,617 children were provided with pre-K in public schools using Title I funds. When combined with 4 year olds served in Head Start and with child care assistance, the state reports nearly 90 percent of at-risk 4-year-olds in Louisiana participate in a publicly-funded 4 year old early childhood program.

State per-child funding for pre-K in 2014 was \$4,565, well below the level of \$6,142 when the [National Institute of Early Education Research](#) (NIEER) first recorded state spending in Louisiana in 2002. Prior to the recession, state per-child spending was \$6,650 in 2008.

Louisiana’s pre-K programs have consistently met all or nearly all of NIEER’s quality standard benchmarks. NSECD was only one of 5 programs nationally to meet all 10 benchmarks but is the smallest of the state’s programs. LA4

met 8 benchmarks, lacking monitoring site visits by state staff (but will now have two CLASS observations annually and a third party CLASS audit) and the assistant teacher requirement, while LA 8(g) met 7 benchmarks.

In 2014, Louisiana was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to expand high-quality preschool programs starting with six high-need communities through a parent choice model within unified local networks, intending to expand statewide through a competitive application process. Using its community network pilot model, Louisiana received \$32M over four years to enable 4,600 at-risk children to choose a new, high-quality option in diverse settings including child care, Head Start, nonpublic and public schools, and improve quality for 6,000 at-risk children in existing centers by having a credentialed teacher who is receiving coaching and professional development, and access to comprehensive services.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 78 percent of age-eligible children in Louisiana enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013, with 92 percent attending full-day programs.

Louisiana consistently fares below average in national education achievement ratings. Louisiana 4<sup>th</sup> graders performed well below the recent national NAEP average scores in reading (23 percent vs. 34 percent proficient nationally) and math (26 percent vs. 41 percent proficient nationally). The high school graduation rate (73.5 percent) is lowest among neighboring states and in the lowest quintile nationally. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In their [rankings](#) Louisiana was 42nd overall for union power and influence, or "weak." At \$10,490 in 2012-2013, Louisiana had the highest spending per pupil of its neighboring states, but this is still slightly below the national average.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Louisiana meets **10** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. It should be noted that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency of quality of practice across large-scale programs can be difficult to assess.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	ND	●	●	○	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

### Rationale

#### Enabling Environment

Louisiana has some aspects of a positive enabling environment formed by the collaborative work of elected officials, a restructured state agency, business leaders, advocates, and philanthropy, all of which are aligned on delivering high-quality pre-K for every 4-year-old child. Much attention has been focused on New Orleans, but the reform efforts clearly seek to address access to quality early education consistently and equitably throughout the state.

**Political will.** In 2013, Gov. Bobby Jindal (R) announced his plans to implement early childhood education reforms stating his plans to streamline the governance of early childhood programs and align the standards and regulations governing the pre-K programs, in order to better utilize resources and improve quality. Louisiana’s pre-K enrollment has essentially been flat and the programs were flat funded from 2010 to 2015. More broadly, Louisiana faces a \$1.6 billion budget shortfall in fiscal year 2016, and a potential \$700 million budget shortfall in fiscal year 2017.

The Legislature is supportive of early education reform efforts in general, including school choice and reforming pre-K specifically. There is significant political support for Louisiana’s Act 3 to improve both quality of and access to early childhood education. Through the three-year pilot effort and the passage of Bulletin 140: Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network in 2015 which defines the implementation of Act 3, stakeholders are to implement a unified early childhood care and education system. Questions have been raised about adequacy of funding to support many of the elements that Act 3 is expected to put in place. Legislative leaders include Rep. Walt Leger III (D), Speaker Pro Tempore, District 91 (New Orleans area); Sen. Mike Walsworth (R), District 33 (Northeast Louisiana); Sen. Conrad Appel (R), Chair of Senate Education Committee, District 9 (Southeast Louisiana); and Sen. Eric LaFleur (D), District 28 (south-central Louisiana).

Other notable legislation includes HB844 (2015) that implements a uniform assessment and accountability system for publicly funded ECE programs that includes letter grades for performance, and HB954 (2014) which allocates state funds to all eligible public schools to work with non-school providers, codifies free tuition for at-risk students, and establishes a sliding scale.

Leadership also extends to business, philanthropy, and advocates. Active organizations working with LDE include the Policy Institute for Children (Melanie Bronfin), Partnership for Children and Families (Sherry Guarisco), Child Care Association of Louisiana (Cindy Bishop), Education’s Next Horizon (John Warner Smith, CEO), and Agenda for Children (Dr. Anthony Recasner, CEO). Louisiana is a state partner of the Alliance for Early Success. Key business supporters include United Way of Southeast Louisiana (Charmaine Caccioppe, COO), Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABA; Brigitte Nieland, VP), and Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL)(Barry Erwin, President & CEO).

Foundations are actively involved in communities. W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Stranahan Foundation, The Buffett Early Childhood Fund (supporting Educare), and Bayou District Foundation (primarily supporting Educare) focus efforts in New Orleans. Louisiana’s main community level foundations—Greater New Orleans Foundation, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Community Foundation of Acadiana, Rapides Foundation, Community Foundation of North Louisiana—have supported early education improvement in various capacities. Melanie Bronfin (Policy Institute for Children) is working to establish a business roundtable on early childhood.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** LDE’s Office of Early Childhood (OEC) administers multiple early childhood programs in a restructured agency better designed to address cross-sector services, including the three state-funded pre-K programs, child care, and Head Start. OEC is led by Jenna Conway (Asst. Supt.) who brings a strong business/systems background to the position. She replaced long-time LDE leader Dr. Mary Louise Jones, a former educator, and there were some staff changes during the transition. Deputy Dir. Derek Little provided aligned leadership in partnership with Asst. Supt. Conway. However, he recently resigned to assume a position with a local parish. The office has restructured and given greater responsibility to Nasha Patel for accountability and coordinated enrollment as required in Act 3.

Staffing capacity at OEC has been strengthened by the Child Care Development Fund administration becoming a part of the department’s work, and receipt of a federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to increase OEC



capacity. Nasha Patel oversees PDG. Plans for OEC include hiring a Director of Operations to oversee child care licensing and cross-office operations.

OEC is working to develop stronger supports within the philanthropy and business sectors of the state, particularly as it explores the potential for Pay for Success as an avenue to fund preschool. OEC is also working closely with resource and referral programs, community and technical colleges and higher education to ensure there are professional preparation options across the state.

The legislature, BESE, and the LDE are aligned in actively implementing the provisions of Act 3 and other related early childhood legislation. State Superintendent John White (formerly from New York) is a proponent of early education and is leading the LDE's shift from a K-12<sup>th</sup> Grade to a Birth-12<sup>th</sup> Grade organization.

On a local level, LEAs have stepped into leadership roles, serving as "lead agencies" for their local early childhood community networks. More than 90 percent of local networks are led by LEAs. Superintendents have become community leaders of early childhood (not just pre-K) and are dedicating district resources to partnering with Head Start and child care to improve teaching, coordinate enrollment, increase access and ultimately, improve child outcomes.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Louisiana's 3 pre-K programs require each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. Salaries for teachers in public school prekindergarten programs are equal to local public kindergarten teachers. All are paid from the same local district salary index. The average teacher salary in 2014 was \$42,246, the lowest in the region and below the \$57,133 national average. The state has no requirements for salaries for teachers in nonpublic school prekindergarten programs.

Assistant teachers are not required to have a minimum of a CDA or equivalent in the two larger pre-K programs. There is no established salary parity at the assistant teacher level nor do state regulations stipulate that benefits must be included for nonpublic professionals.

In line with Act 3, the OEC is currently building a professional pathway for all early childhood teachers. While maintaining a BA and teaching certificate requirement for teachers in public and nonpublic pre-K, OEC has established a new Ancillary Teaching Certificate as a minimum expectation for teachers in publicly-funded child care centers. The new Ancillary Teaching Certificate is based on the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with a specific emphasis on teacher-child interactions and instruction. All lead child care teachers in licensed, publicly funded programs will be required to have an Ancillary Teaching Certificate or higher starting in 2019. This certificate will be a first step towards a new Birth-to-K BA degree and teaching certificate that will be offered by Louisiana higher education institutions. However, it is not required that teachers possess this BA-level license.

**Adult-child ratios.** Louisiana has a maximum class size of 20 four-year-olds and requires an adult-child ratio of 1:10, meeting Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios of 1:11.

**Learning time.** Children attend Louisiana's pre-K programs five days per week during the school year and services are provided a minimum of 6 hours per day. Wraparound services extending the length of the school day are common in most nonpublic settings, typically funded with child care subsidy or parent fees. This "dosage" of early learning time meets the criteria found in high-quality, effective programs.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and another adult acting as assistant teacher are present at all times during the 6-hour instructional program. Assistant teachers are not required to possess specialized training or credentials, with the exception of those teaching in Head Start centers where a CDA or plan to obtain a CDA or higher degree is required.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning & Development Standards (ELDS) are research-based, developmentally appropriate early learning standards that form the foundation for strong teaching and learning in Louisiana's early childhood classrooms. The ELDS are aligned with Kindergarten content standards and Common Core State Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state requires that publicly funded prekindergarten programs provide opportunities for activities and routines, curriculum, and planning that are developmentally-appropriate, and support inter-related development, while addressing Louisiana's ELDS. Recommended curriculum models are not clearly specified but the state is currently reviewing curricula submitted to provide guidance on which early childhood curricula are most aligned to the state standards. Reviews are due April 30, 2016 and involve an analysis using a rubric that evaluates aligned to the ELDS, complexity, quality of materials, use of materials, ability to scaffold learning, and opportunities for parent involvement. Similar to its approach to K-12, the LDE will provide guidance and tools (e.g., guidebooks) for selecting and implementing recommended curriculum.

Curriculum implementation supports are available on OEC's website, including sample lesson plans that align with the ELDS and webinars.

**Support for students with special needs.** Two of Louisiana's three pre-K programs use the full-inclusion classroom model. LA4 reported serving 1,186 four-year-olds with special needs, 7 percent of its enrollment. LA 8(g) was unable to report number served. NSECD enrolls children with special needs but provides no additional funding and did not record enrollment numbers. Funds from special education and the state funding formula are used to support inclusionary placement of students, and the state has provided separate funding opportunities for local districts to improve inclusion practices, regardless of where the children are served (including in NSECD settings). The state's ELDS offer cursory attention to inclusion by providing limited strategies to support children with disabilities and ELL in a one-page appendix. However, the LDE released a document that highlights the department's commitment to inclusion.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** LDE permits bilingual and monolingual non-English classes in state prekindergarten programs and stipulates that ELL services must be provided, including but not limited to, communications in the families' language, seeking the services of interpreters, and other locally determined services. Such guidance results in varying levels of ELL services throughout the region. As previously noted, the state's ELDS address ELLs by providing limited strategies in a one-page appendix.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Effective, developmentally appropriate teaching practices are emphasized and supported by OEC, incorporating them as criteria for program report cards or program profiles that are currently being implemented statewide for practice. OEC continues to develop systematic efforts through use of CLASS training for teachers and program monitoring to ensure all children receive excellent instruction. Specifically, Louisiana is funding local networks to ensure every teacher receives two CLASS observations and feedback in 2015-2016 to help improve instruction. As a result, Louisiana has increased the number of CLASS-reliable observers statewide as well as supports for principals, directors and teachers for improving interactions and instruction. In addition, OEC will

use third party CLASS observers for comparison and to ensure accuracy. CLASS scores are currently not available for review. The first practice profiles for all programs and community networks will be released in Fall 2016.

**Child assessments.** In the 2015-2016 school year, pursuant to Bulletin 140, publicly funded sites statewide must participate in the early childhood care and education accountability system, which includes both classroom observations and student assessment. Pre-K sites must ensure all publicly funded children receive completed assessments in October, February, and May. Programs are currently using TS GOLD or another state-approved assessment tool. Sites are required to obtain approval from OEC prior to using child assessment tools other than TS GOLD. The state plans to report publicly on key metrics of assessment results.

For those programs using TS GOLD, all teachers must be trained and pass a reliability test. The state has supported programs by providing funding for training teachers on TS GOLD.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Ongoing accountability of early childhood quality and effectiveness remains a priority for Louisiana and systems for such are being established as per provisions of Act 3 (2012) legislation. With the passage of Act 3 and Bulletin 140, a statewide accountability system was established, which outlines expectations for lead agencies, publicly funded sites, and community networks.

As part of the accountability system, every publicly funded site and community network will receive a practice performance profile starting in 2015-2016. These profiles will provide a rating of the quality of teacher-child interactions based on CLASS which will be verified by an independent third party (Cecil J. Picard Center at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette). Profiles also will include information regarding child-to-staff ratios, the standards-alignment of curriculum used, use of ongoing formative assessment, family and teacher satisfaction, and other metrics. Reporting these data in a unified way across all early childhood programs, for both individual sites as well as at the community level, is intended to drive improvement statewide. Original plans to grade programs and communities using an A-F metric have been replaced with a 3-level rating of "Proficient," "Needs Improvement," or "Not Demonstrated."

In June 2013, the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning continued a longitudinal evaluation entitled Longitudinal Study: Longitudinal Impacts on Academic Achievement for Participants in Louisiana's LA4, NSECD, and 8(g) Early Childhood Programs. The most recent evaluation of 2012-2013, reported positive findings in the longitudinal study, "LA4 children's performance is higher than the Louisiana state average on both iLEAP and LEAP" (English Language Arts and Math assessments).

**Professional development.** Louisiana's pre-K programs require teachers to receive a minimum of 18 hours of professional development annually. Pilot funding has also supported local networks to identify and train local CLASS-reliable observers and trainers who also offer professional development. The state has supported local community networks by offering or funding training on the ELDS, curriculum, CLASS and TS GOLD. The LDE works closely with higher education, Head Start Collaboration Office, resource and referral programs and mental health consultation programs to ensure evidence-based training, coaching and technical assistance is available for all early childhood professionals. It is not clear to what extent professional development efforts are designed to address teachers' individualized needs or the level of coaching made available.

The LDE is using CCDF funds to increase scholarships from \$500,000 to \$5 million and launch preparation programs that partner with local networks and include classroom practice and CLASS observations. Districts are responsible for providing ample planning time for teachers to incorporate assessment results into curriculum, however actual monitoring of such is not apparent.

**Integrated system.** In 2012, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 3, unifying multiple early childhood initiatives under the direction of LDE in collaboration with other state agencies. The act calls for a definition of Kindergarten readiness, performance targets aligned to the state’s K-12 standards, a uniform assessment and accountability system for all publicly funded programs (child care, Head Start, private preschools, and pre-K), and a cross-agency integrated data system. It also requires a unified professional development system, birth-through-five early learning and development standards, and revamping the current QRIS and associated School Readiness Tax Credits.

In July 2013, the Department launched 13 Community Network Pilots to test this new unified system. In January 2015, the state expanded the number of Community Network Pilots to include an additional 33 communities in order to move towards full implementation of Act 3 in the 2015-2016 school year.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

[Act 3 \(2012\)](#) – The Louisiana Early Childhood Education Act

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Ramey, C., Ramey, S., & Asmus, G. (2011). LA 4 longitudinal study: The impact of LA 4 participation on academic achievement in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade: iLEAP & LEAP performance for cohorts 1-4. Lafayette, LA: Picard Center.



## Maine

### Public Preschool Program

Maine established its Two-Year Kindergarten initiative in 1983 by allocating resources to local districts through the school funding formula. State-funded programs for 4-year-olds have been separately defined as the Public Preschool Program (PPP) since 2007, and remain funded through the school funding formula, with distributions going directly to school districts. School administrative units (SAUs) have not been required to offer a public preschool program. However, legislation enacted in 2014 encouraged voluntary preschool throughout the state, increasing the number of public preschool programs to serve children at risk. It is anticipated that all SAUs will have at least one preschool classroom by the 2018-2019 school year.

During 2014-2015, 32 percent of Maine's public schools had a PPP and 88 percent of SAUs offered a public preschool education program. SAU participation has increased annually since 2009, when PPP was available in 24 percent of districts. Although many SAUs have partnered with community-based child care programs or Head Start agencies to offer early childhood services, the majority of Maine's preschool programs are located in public schools.

In 2014-2015, Maine's preschool programs served 5,080 children, approximately 36 percent of the state's 4-year-olds. In 2013-2014 the state spent \$13,326,853, approximately \$5,968 per child. Funding increased modestly (3 percent, inflation-adjusted) in 2014-2015. In 2014, Maine was awarded a federal Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) for \$14.7 million over the four years of the grant. The number of children served during the 2015-2016 school year will increase significantly as a result of the PEG.

As reported in the 2014 *State of Preschool Yearbook*, Maine met 5 Benchmarks—but did not meet class size, child to staff ratio, meals, referrals, or monitoring. However, according to the new Chapter 124 Public Preschool Program Standards Regulations, Maine will most likely meet all of the benchmarks during the 2015-2016 year for all new and expanded programs, according to informants (and the legislation). All programs will need to meet the standards by the 2017-18 school year.

In K-12 education, Maine ranks higher than the US average for education spending at \$12,147 per pupil in 2013. The State scores above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with an 86.4 percent graduation rate, higher than the US average. Maine reported much lower per pupil spending on public education compared to neighboring states Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, according to [Ballotpedia](#). [EdExcellence](#) ranked Maine 22nd for strength of teacher union, which is about average for the nation.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 70.8 percent of age-eligible children in Maine were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013, 81.4 percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Maine’s Public Preschool Program is being evaluated on the changes that will be occurring as the new Chapter 124 regulations are being implemented starting in 2015-2016. Maine’s pre-K program meets **seven** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **five** elements. This will change with the new Chapter 124 regulations, which will add as many as 8 more of the essential elements which were reflected last year as partially or not met in the chart below. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	–	●	–	●	●	○	○	●	ND	○	●	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** The last 3 Commissioners have been highly supportive of preschool in Maine, as shown by putting preschool program standards into regulations, and in increasing access. A year and a half ago, legislation was passed encouraging all districts to open a preschool classroom by 2017. There is real recognition that a high quality preschool program counts. Chapter 124 raises quality standards substantially.

The Legislature was supportive with language recommending increased fiscal support as regulations were being promulgated. Also, the Maine Children’s Growth Council, an interagency group, meets once per month and is determining the most appropriate data and research questions.

Maine approved a voluntary universal pre-K expansion law that goes into effect in 2015-2016. ME will use over \$4 million of casino revenue to fund start-up costs for preschool programs in districts that do not have them or want to expand existing programs. Funding will be available beginning with the 2015-2016 school year with the goal of having preschool programs for four-year-old children operating in all school districts by 2018-2019.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** There is some vision for expansion and improved quality, as evident in the successful grant proposal. The grant funding has increased staff at the Maine Department of Education (MDE). The University of Maine System, in collaboration, under a joint committee of the Legislature, will be examining the impact of the public preschool programs. They began with a survey to all school administrative units in the fall of 2014, to determine how many programs were already meeting the new program standards.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies



**Education and compensation.** Regardless of setting, all lead teachers are required to hold a Bachelor's degree and an 081 Certification: Early Childhood Birth-5 from the Department of Education. There is not salary parity among pre-K teachers and K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** According to the 2104 NIEER Yearbook data, the teacher to child ratio was reported as being 1:15. However, if a district partners with a Head Start or child care, the program must hold a DHHS and ratios of 1:10 must be met. The new Chapter 124, however, requires a 1:8 ratio for pre-K programs.

**Learning time.** Hours are determined locally, although programs must operate a minimum of 10 hours per week to receive a per-pupil subsidy through the school funding formula. Some programs provide a full school day, 5-day program, some provide a part-day program and operate four half days with the fifth day used for home visits and teacher planning. All programs operate for the academic year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** With the implementation of Chapter 124, all pre-K classrooms must have one certified teacher and one assistant teacher in the classroom.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Maine has had early learning and development standards since 2005. They were revised in 2015 and aligned with Maine College and Career Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** In the regulations, Maine requires an evidence-based curriculum, it is a local decision as to what is used, although all of the PEG grantees are using either OWL or High Scope. Chapter 124 states: "Each school administrative unit shall have an evidence-based written curriculum aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. The school administrative unit shall inform parents and students of the curriculum, instructional expectations, and assessment system. Public preschool programs must demonstrate curriculum practice that aligns with the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards and is appropriate for the age and developmental level of the students. Teachers must organize space and select materials in all content and developmental areas to stimulate exploration, experimentation, discovery and conceptual learning."

This system does not include state support for training or professional development on the implementation of the curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** Birth-to-5 special education services are provided through B-5 regional Child Development Services (CDS) System; the school administrative unit of residence for that child often suggests placement.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In 2014-2015, three percent of PPP children come from homes in which English is not the primary language and according to the US Census Bureau, 6.8 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

Maine has a state policy for supporting DLL/ELL students and adds additional weight to the state formula to support these students. Teachers are supported through webinars and conferences and families are provided interpreters.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Maine has very recently introduced new standards and policies, as outlined in Chapter 124. It is too early to assess yet whether practice is strong, as programs have had little, if any, chance to implement them. Staff support, processes, and professional development and administrative support appear to be evolving, as part of the recent Preschool Development Grant award. There are not any CLASS or ECERS observations of PPP that were able to be reviewed.

**Child assessments.** Formative assessment is part of Chapter 124 regulations. Programs must provide periodic and ongoing research-based assessment of children’s learning and development that documents each child’s interests, needs, and progress to help plan instruction, relying mostly on demonstrated performance of authentic activities. The authentic activities include children’s work samples, observations, anecdotal notes, checklists and inventories, parent conference notes, photographs, video, health screening reports and referral records for support services. Communication with families occurs regularly, to ensure connection between home and school, including providing interpreters and translators, as needed. Assessments align with the Early Learning and Development Standards and are used to inform curriculum and instruction. Assessments are informed by family culture, experiences, children’s abilities and disabilities, and home language. Assessments are used in settings familiar to the children and inform activities to support planning for individual children.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** An in-state work group with representative members operated for two years to fine-tune early learning and development standards, back-map them to infant-toddler guidelines and forward-map them to Maine’s College and Career Ready Standards. In Chapter 124, use of CLASS to measure teacher-child interaction is encouraged to be used for new and expanded programs beginning in the 2015-16 school year, as well as using individual assessments to differentiate instruction. This is an integral part of the PEG and the state has offered training and support to other classrooms as well.

No external evaluation of the program has been done, although a case study of four high quality programs was completed in 2015. The Maine Education Policy Research Institute is now involved in an ongoing evaluation of Maine programs.

There is a Trusted Broker Agreement between MDE and Health and Human Services with the University of Maine system serving as an independent entity who will hold matches of student IDs between the departments. There will be detailed data agreements to address specific data examinations across the departments. Some of Maine’s public preschool programs have been in place since the mid 1980s, so it is possible to examine 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade scores of children who participated in those programs compared with those who did not. Proficiency scores were maintained at 8-9 percent above their age-mates who were not in public preschool programs.

**Professional development.** New classrooms were each allocated money to have an instructional coach work as a link between pre-K and K-to-3, supporting teachers and aligning preschool to the K-3 curriculum. Coaches are hired by local districts. A Public Preschool Collaboration Coach model was used in prior years to support partnerships among public schools, Head Start agencies, and child care programs with implementing a diverse delivery system. In addition, the state funding formula provides funds to school administrative units for professional development on a yearly basis.

**Integrated system.** As noted above, many elements of the system are now integrated, as outlined in Chapter 124. A monitoring position within the MDE will be added, jointly funded by the grant (50 percent) and by Child Development Services System (50 percent) to maintain consistency across all programs.

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Maine Department of Education](#)

[State of Maine Rule Chapters for the Department of Education](#): Rule 124: Basic Approval Standards: Public Preschool Programs



## Maryland

### Maryland Prekindergarten Program

In 1980, Maryland created the Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP), a pilot preschool program in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. The program eventually expanded throughout the state and by 2002, served 25 percent of the state's 4-year-olds. In 2002, finance reform legislation passed, requiring all local boards of education to offer pre-K in public schools to all economically underprivileged 4-year-olds by the 2007-2008 school year and the program became known as the Prekindergarten Program. Since 2012-2013, enrollment in pre-K has been steadily increasing and in 2015, 30,381 children participated in pre-K. In 2014, the Prekindergarten Expansion Act added an additional \$4.3 million to expand the access to half-day and full-day public Pre-K for 4-year-olds from families with household incomes at or below 300 percent of FPL. Expansion Act funding may go to private programs.

Maryland has 25 early learning centers of distinction, in addition to public prekindergarten. These centers are known as Judy Centers, and are located in Title 1 school districts. The Judy Centers work collaboratively with selected elementary schools to offer comprehensive year-round services for children from birth to age 6. Judy Center Partnerships during the 2014-2015 school year provided enhanced, continuous learning opportunities to 15,205 young children and their families, including 6,070 children younger than 3 years old. Some of these children may be counted in the pre-K enrollment.

Head Start programs also receive supplemental funds from Maryland, in order to expand enrollment and support extended-day and summer services. The state provided \$1.8 million statewide in order to support extended-day/week services for 11,356 Head Start attendees during the 2014-2015 school year, as well.

Maryland was one of nine state winners in the initial round of the federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) in 2012. In 2013, the state received additional federal funding to coordinate a consortium to develop and implement a statewide kindergarten entrance assessment and voluntary pre-K formative tool that was piloted in 2014-2015. In 2014, Maryland was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$15 million.

In K-12 education, Maryland ranked 12<sup>th</sup> nationally in per pupil spending, \$13,829 per pupil, according to [Ballotpedia](#). The state's graduation rate was 85 percent in 2013, and Maryland had one of the highest percentages (47 percent) of fourth-graders scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP reading test; only Massachusetts scored higher. All of the other NAEP scores were above the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions and ranked Maryland 23<sup>rd</sup> in the country or "average."

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 77.4 percent of age-eligible children in Maryland were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 86.3 percent were attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Maryland’s Prekindergarten Program meets **eight** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **five** elements. Private programs funded through the Expansion grants or as Judy centers are not subject to the same policies as public school pre-K, reducing the number of essential elements that are fully met. Actual implementation and practice is difficult to judge without an evaluation or access to classroom observation data. If the requirements of the QRIS are rigorously applied and implemented then good teaching could be common practice, but we were unable to verify this from available data.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	○	●	—	●	●	○	●	○	ND	●	●	○	●

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      — Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Governor Larry Hogan (R) began his “Governor’s Young Readers” program in 2015 with every child from infancy to age 5 in Baltimore City were eligible to enroll in a book-delivery program. Every month, each enrolled child will receive a new book, supported by the [Family League of Baltimore](#). Other than this project, the Governor’s education priorities are focused on K-12 students.

The education advocacy groups in Maryland, such as [Advocates for Children and Youth](#) and [Maryland Family Network](#), are supportive of pre-K, but have other advocacy priorities. This may explain why funding per child has declined over the long term and enrollment in pre-K as a percentage of the population is basically unchanged since 2008. In 2014-2015, funding dropped by 24 percent (inflation-adjusted). Even though all state’s school districts offer pre-K, only 36 percent of the state’s 4-year-old population was enrolled in 2014-2015.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) housed in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is responsible for early care and education in Maryland. The Division is composed of the Office of Child Care, the Early Learning Branch and the Collaboration and Program Improvement Branch. The Early Learning Branch is responsible for pre-K and kindergarten policy and programs as well as the child assessment system, early childhood curriculum, and the early childhood alternative pathway preparation. The Collaborative and Program Improvement Branch manages the Judy Centers and the Head Start State Collaborative project.

The Maryland State Legislature enacted the Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Enhancement Program in May of 2000. The legislation created Judy Centers modeled after Judy Hoyer’s program and financed an expansion across the state, offering comprehensive, integrated, full-day and full-year early care and education services. In 2001, 13 Judy Centers were established which has since expanded to 52 Judy Centers across Maryland.

Rolf Grafwallner is the Assistant State Superintendent of DECD. Dr. Grafwallner is very active in Maryland, being appointed by the State Superintendent to co-chair Maryland’s Task Force on Universal Preschool Education.

Nationally, he serves as an early learning fellow faculty at the National Conference of State Legislatures. He has 30 years of experience in early childhood education as a teacher, program manager, and state administrator.

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Lead teachers must have a BA with appropriate Early Education teacher certification. In addition, teachers must meet highly qualified teacher requirements under NCLB. Maryland requires salary parity for pre-K teachers in public schools. Teachers in private programs funded through the expansion legislation or Judy Centers are not required to have the same salary as public school pre-K programs.

**Adult-child ratios.** State policy stipulates an average of 20 students per classroom with two teachers. Exceptions may occur where individual classrooms exceed this ratio, provided an overall program average of 20 is maintained. By policy, 3-year-olds are not eligible for state pre-K, but state child care regulations require a maximum class size of 20 and a staff to child ratio of 1:10 for 3- and 4-year-olds.

**Learning time.** Programs operate five days per week as a full school-day program or they operate four part-days per week with the fifth day used for home visits and teacher planning. Programs are either a half-day (2½ hour) or full-day (6½ hour) session.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults are required in Pre-K classrooms.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Social Foundations standards cover ages 3 through 5 in the strands of Personal and Social Development, Approaches to Learning, and Executive Function. The MD College and Career Ready Standards, approved in 2013, refer to Pre-K (4-year-olds) through grade 12 and cover English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Physical Well-Being and Motor Development, Health, Fine Arts, and Social Foundations (for Pre-K–K). The CCSS for Math and ELA were completed in summer 2012. As part of the RTT-ELC grant, Maryland's early learning standards were revised in 2015 and then aligned with Common Core and the state's college and career ready standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The [Early Childhood Curriculum Project](#) was established to identify early childhood curricular resources that could be State-recommended for alignment with Maryland standards in non-public school programs. State funded pre-K may use the identified resources. Early childhood programs operated by local boards of education are not required to select from the [State-recommended list](#) (Frog Street, DLM EC Express, Little Treasures, InestiGator Club, Curiosity Corner, Kinder Corner, or Creative Curriculum) but must certify that the local curriculum is aligned with the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards.

**Support for students with special needs.** [Maryland's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project](#) has consultants who go into the Pre-K classrooms to support teachers in promoting a classroom climate conducive to positive child behavior through observing children and the environment; partnering with the pre-K programs to train, mentor and coach the teachers; and offering support families.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Revised prekindergarten regulations were implemented in 2014-2015 to help districts meet the kindergarten readiness needs of low-income, special education, and English Language Learner (ELL) students. State level policy exists for ELLs for K-12, but for pre-K policies are determined at the local level. In kindergarten, the WIDA assessment tool is used to determine if children should exit from ELL status. Recruitment and outreach information is provided to families in the appropriate home language and a home language information survey is sent home at the beginning of the school year. Professional development modules

are being created to support PD regarding best practices for ELLs. Eighteen percent of Maryland's 3- and 4-year-olds are ELLs.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** ECERS and CLASS assessments were not available for review. However, all programs are required to be at level 5 in the QRIS and this requires corrective action plans for any subscale score on the ECERS below a 5.

**Child assessments.** All Pre-K Programs must conduct a child assessment utilizing a locally developed assessment that aligns with the local school system curriculum; the upcoming Ready 4 Kindergarten: The Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System being developed by Maryland and Ohio; or an assessment aligned with a state-recommended curriculum.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** All of Maryland's school districts offer pre-K. All state-funded pre-K programs must participate and achieve Level 5 in [Maryland EXCEL](#) (the State's QRIS system).

State policy requires local school systems to analyze the kindergarten assessment system in order to evaluate the effectiveness of pre-K and to make necessary adjustments to the instructional program. As a recipient of RTT-ELC funding, Maryland is collaborating with Ohio in the development of Ready 4 Kindergarten: The Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment provides the data on incoming kindergartners that the school systems use in evaluating the effectiveness of pre-K. The Early Learning Assessment component is a voluntary formative assessment that pre-K as well as all teachers with children from 36-72 months can use.

There has not been a formal, third-party evaluation of the pre-K program statewide.

**Professional development.** Through the required participation in the QRIS system, pre-K programs are able to access targeted technical assistance, both online and face-to-face. Maryland's PD offerings are able to be located through the [statewide training clearinghouse](#) and Maryland has a trainer registry. Pre-K teachers are required to complete 24 hours or in-service annually.

**Integrated system.** The [Maryland Early Learning Framework](#) incorporates Maryland's early learning standards for children (birth to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade), which are aligned with College and Career-Ready Standards; the Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System; the [Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Childhood Pedagogy-Birth to Age 8](#), which identifies how to create rich and meaningful early learning experiences for every child; and the [Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework](#).

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Gomez, R., Horowitz, M., Weisenfeld, G.G., Clarke Brown, K., & Squires, J.H. (2016). [The state of preschool 2015: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Maryland EXCELS [website](#).

Maryland State Department of Education, Early Childhood Development [Website](#).



## **Massachusetts**

### **Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments IPLE MA 391**

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) was established in 2005 to improve quality, affordability, and access to preschool education services. The same year EEC was created, the state started its Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) initiative, which serves children beginning at age 2 years, 9 months, until they arrive at the locally determined kindergarten eligibility age. Public schools, private child care centers, Head Start programs, family child care, and faith-based centers are eligible for UPK grants if they offer full-day, full-year services. UPK is usually a competitive grant program, though renewal grants had been used in recent years during funding constraints.

During the 2014-2015 program year, the state issued \$6.3 million in renewal grants for the existing 224 UPK grantees. Individual child eligibility is not based on income level, though programs must be willing to serve children from families with income levels at or below 85 percent of the state's median income (SMI). UPK was assessed for process quality during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years.

Massachusetts also offers the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (IPLE) Grant as referred to as the Grant 391 program. The Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments (IPLE) Grant is designed to support inclusive preschool learning environments serving preschool-age children with and without disabilities in high quality, inclusive early education and care settings. This program has funded typically developing preschool-age children, since 1985. There is no income qualification for enrollment in this program.

During the 2014-2015 program year, the state issued \$9.1 million in renewal grants for the existing 92 IPLE grantees. The FY 2015 grant priorities were to support program capacity to offer inclusive preschool learning environments in center-based programs and public school preschool programs; and to enhance program quality by continuing to require IPLE funded programs to participate in QRIS.

In the 2014-2015 school year, a \$750,000 state appropriation for K1 classrooms allowed cities/towns, regional school districts, and educational collaborative to provide educational opportunities on a voluntary basis to 4-year-olds in the district by creating prekindergarten classrooms. Two grants were funded: \$500,000 will be used for Preschool Access and Quality Grants and another \$250,000 will be used for Preschool Quality Enhancement Grants.

In 2014, Massachusetts was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$15 million. Massachusetts also provides \$8 million dollars for an additional 235 slots for eligible children in the federal Head Start program, as well as funding for before- and after-care services. State supplemental funding is also used for quality-improvement purposes within Head Start, including professional development opportunities for staff.

Massachusetts' UPK program and IPLE earned 6 out of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2014-2015 school year, according to the 2015 State of Preschool Yearbook. The state does not require teachers to have a

Bachelors degree or specialized training, and assistant teachers are not required to have a CDA or equivalent. Meals are only served in some programs, depending upon the length of the program day.

In K-12 education, on average Massachusetts spent \$14,515 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it eighth highest in the nation. In 2012-2013, Massachusetts had the highest percentages of fourth graders (58 percent) and eighth graders (47 percent) scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP reading test. Massachusetts’ graduation rate was 85 percent, second lowest among its neighboring states (Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York).

Massachusetts’ teachers union ranked 21st overall for union power and influence, or “average” in a 2012 Fordham University [study](#). The state requires districts to offer a full-day kindergarten program. The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 79 percent of age-eligible children in Massachusetts were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 76 percent attended full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Massachusetts’s UPK program has **five** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **seven** elements; the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments [IPLE] MA 391 has **five** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **six** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	–	●	–	●	●	○	○	●	–	○	●	○	○

### Massachusetts Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments IPLE MA 391

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	–	●	–	●	●	○	●	●	ND	–	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** State funding and enrollment for pre-K has been relatively low and without notable increases for many years including FY 2016. In 2015, early childhood education advocates were disappointed when Gov. Charlie Baker (R) did not support attempts to serve the estimated 17,000 children on the pre-K waiting list. Later that year, he vetoed a \$5 million reduction in funds for early childhood programs, as well as a \$17.6 million reduction for full-day kindergarten grants. Gov. Baker's FY 2017 budget includes a new Quality Improvement line item in the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) budget which would draw on funds transferred from existing line items including UPK, Early Childhood Mental Health, Services for Infants and Parents, Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, and EEC administration. He also proposes level-funding full-day kindergarten grants.

Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh (D) is seen as very supportive of pre-K efforts. During his 2013 campaign for mayor, had campaigned on universal pre-K and in January 2016, co-wrote an opinion column in the Boston Globe. Strategies for Children and others have been very vocal and instrumental in getting state budget line items added. There has been lots of interest in advocacy and business in terms of supporting the visions, and strategies have been part of Ralph Smith's Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Barr Foundation, and United Way.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** EEC is the lead agency for all early education and care services in Massachusetts including pre-K and QRIS efforts. EEC is one of three agencies within the Executive Office of Education; the other two are the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education. The Executive Office of Education is one of eight Executive Offices under Gov. Baker.

The Commissioner of EEC is Thomas L. Weber. Prior to his 2013 appointment, he was the Undersecretary for the Executive Office of Education, where he oversaw budget and finance, legal, legislative affairs, information technology, policy, communications, and general administration. He also worked as Strategies for Children's Legislative Director, and as the Director of Community Partnerships in the Massachusetts Attorney General's office.

There are six regional EEC offices and each has a Regional Director, Regional QRIS Contact, and a Family Community Quality Specialist. The Massachusetts State Head Start Collaboration Office sits in EEC, but does not itself exercise administrative authority over the pre-K initiatives.

Local universities have been active in early childhood issues and developing state policies and standards. Northeastern has been pushing quality across the board; and University of Massachusetts, Boston has been creating early education teachers' certificates and articulation agreements with other institutes of higher education.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and Compensation.** All pre-K teachers must have an early childhood education certification, for public school teachers it is a pre-K–grade 2 certification and nonpublic school teachers are certified by EEC. BA requirements align with QRIS levels. For centers at Level 2 in the QRIS, all members of the teaching staff must have a minimum of 3 credits in ECE or a related field, and 50 percent of classrooms must have an educator with a BA. For Level 3 programs, 75 percent of classrooms must have an educator with a BA. For Level 4 programs, 100 percent of classrooms must have an educator with a BA.

For UPK and IPLE, there is no requirement for salary parity. The UPK grant allows grantees to use funds towards salary enhancement, between public and private preschool teachers. Elementary and secondary programs use entire salaries across the board; so there is not clear data on existing salary levels. Through the preschool expansion grant the state was able to begin to look at salary parity between teachers in two types of setting at preschool settings only.

**Adult-child ratios.** UPK has a 1:10 ratio for 3- and 4-year-olds; IPLE has a 1:7-10 ratio for both. Maximum class size is 20 in both programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.

**Learning time.** UPK program hours are determined locally and vary by program, either operating for a school-year or full-year schedule, but all UPK programs are required to offer or provide access to full-day, full-year services. Part-week opportunities are also used, which are all determined locally.

The IPLE programs hours and operating schedule vary by type of program and setting. The majority of IPLE grantees follow the public school calendar year, which is determined locally. These IPLE grant-funded programs typically offer a combination of part-day, school-day, and extended-day. Part-week opportunities are also used, which are all determined locally. IPLE grant-funded programs that are supported by other supplemental funding, such as EEC financial assistance, UPK grant, or Head Start must follow the operating schedule as determined by these contractual requirements

**Two adults in the classroom.** In all programs a 1:10 ratio is required.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** In 2003, the [Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences](#) were developed, covering all essential domains. All programs must follow the Guidelines. In 2011, the state merged its current standards with the Common Core State Standards and released the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Pre-K. Programs are not required to follow the Curriculum Frameworks, though public school programs in UPK are likely to follow them. Public school programs must also follow the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for preschool and kindergarten for older 4- and 5-year-olds.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state has provided a list of approved curricula and guidelines. As part of the requirements for UPK, programs must ensure that educators are providing developmentally appropriate experiences and practices as evidenced by use of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Preschool and Kindergarten.

The [Required Services Section](#) for IPLE states that programs must “support the development and early learning of children with and without disabilities in inclusive preschool settings through the implementation of a developmentally appropriate and inclusive early childhood curriculum aligned with The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for Preschool and Kindergarten.

**Support for students with special needs.** A child with special needs could remain in the UPK preschool program, however, he/she would no longer be counted in the UPK formula. For special needs children, the team may allow a child to remain in a program designed for 3- and 4-year-old children for the duration of the school year in which the child turns five years old (including the summer following the date of the child's fifth birthday).

For IPLE, the primary focus is on inclusion, and grant eligibility includes expectations around the composition of classrooms: 15% of the children enrolled must have IEPs in each session. All of the sessions must follow state special education regulations, consistent with IDEA.

To receive funding through this grant: At least 15 percent of the children enrolled in each IPLE funded session/classroom must have a documented disability for the classroom to be considered an inclusive preschool learning environment; and, for each child who is enrolled in an IPLE funded program and participates in the IPLE funded classroom as a “child with disability”, the IPLE program is required to have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place that documents each child’s special education needs and describes the services that are being provided to meet those needs. For the IPLE grant, there were 2,055 children receiving special education services in 2014-2015.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In Massachusetts, it is estimated by EEC that more than one in four children under age six live in households that speak a language other than English. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations in June 2012, which include a requirement that all incumbent core academic teachers of ELLs earn a Sheltered English Immersion Teacher Endorsement by July 1, 2016. Early childhood education teachers in all Massachusetts public schools, charter schools, and collaborative are covered by these policies.

In 2015, WIDA Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELD) to support ELLs ages 2.5 to 5.5 years old were adopted. EEC is working with its Educator and Provider Support Networks, the Regional Readiness Centers, and WIDA to offer professional development opportunities on the E-ELD Standards to early educators as well as higher education staff.

EEC utilized funding from the RTT-ELC grant to contract with the CAYL Institute to organize a Higher Education Faculty Institute with deans and administrators on the topic of higher education for ELLs in the early education field, developed a Career Lattice for ELLs entering into college, and held focus groups to identify ways to support ELL students on a career pathway. CAYL provided EEC with a summary report of their findings recommendations for supporting ELLs in attaining professional credentials and college degrees.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS, ECERS, and/or Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale assessments are collected as part of the QRIS system, however the average program scores are not reported publicly.

In 2009, Abt Associates evaluated the UPK implementation and collected CLASS scores during 2008-2009. Average CLASS scores for the UPK classrooms observed were 5.63 in Emotional Support, 5.00 in Classroom Organization, and 2.54 in Instructional Support.

**Child assessments.** UPK programs are required to use one of three approved student assessment tools: TS GOLD, Work Sampling System (WSS) or High Scope COR (COR). The majority of programs use TS GOLD. Through a state assessment grant, the state can provide PD/training for programs. There is a collaborative for educational services and a grantee that provides training on QRIS measurement tools.

Documentation of children’s learning and/or child outcomes is not required per the IPLE grant, but the majority of IPLE grantees are LEAs that are required to report on Early Childhood Indicators for Preschool Outcomes for OSEP under IDEA Part B 619 via DESE, although that is not specifically collected for this state pre-K program.

**Data-driven decision-making.** For UPK, all programs are required to be self-assessed at Level 3 in QRIS. As a result, EEC's regional Program Quality Specialists reviewed all of the QRIS applications to confirm that the UPK

programs did the following activities: completed the Environment Rating Scales for all the classrooms, utilized a formative assessment tool (TS GOLD, WSS, or COR), completed the CLASS or the Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale, documented professional development for the program administrator and staff, documented Individual Professional Development Plan for the program administrator and staff, completed the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment (along with a Program Improvement Plan if necessary), completed the Program Administration Scale and submitted all other required documents.

All IPLE programs were required to be participating in QRIS self-assessed and final submitted at QRIS Level 1 or higher. A QRIS validation study is wrapping up as part of the state's RTT-ELC award.

Each February ECC submits a report to the legislature on programs and initiatives. The reports provide an update on the activities, progress, and accomplishments over the past year as well as identify the sustainability of federally funded projects. During the 2009-2010 year, EEC funded a Waitlist, Access, and Continuity of Services Study to assess the need for preschool services, access, and continuity challenges as the state implements UPK on a larger scale.

**Professional development.** Both programs require 150 clock hours of PD every 5 years. EEC provides professional development opportunities, coaching, and mentoring through the Educator Provider Support Grant; offering training and resources in formative assessment tools and effective practices; making fiscal support available for programs to achieve NAEYC accreditation (these practices listed are required to achieve NAEYC accreditation); and offering QRIS Improvement grants.

Coaching has been funded through the RTT-ELC grant and supports the alignment of programs to meet QRIS standards. There are several different coaching models and programs being utilized. Over the past two years, 38 pairs of coaches and mentees participated in the Peer Assistance and Coaching (PAC) project. The PAC coaches received specialized training, including CLASS, from the regional Educator and Provider Support network via monthly professional learning communities. Six regional facilitators support the coaching process.

**Integrated system.** A system exists, but the state acknowledges that it may not be a coherent system across all sectors of a mixed delivery system. The state has done a deep analysis with an educator/provider support grant. There are pieces of a PD system, but the state currently requires different things for different grants. The state is in the process of building a higher education PD/workforce working group to develop recommendations for the Board to shape future developments and alignment. Staff also recently participated in a leadership retreat with Diane Schilder from CEELo, and is in the process of building a more coherent system.

Starting in 2012, EEC partnered with Sharon Lynn Kagan, Catherine Scott-Little, Jeanne Reid, and their teams at Teachers College, Columbia University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, to conduct an 18-month analysis of the content and alignment of the ELDs, kindergarten standards, the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and child assessment tools. The results affirm that Massachusetts has a solid set of standards for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, but could strengthen and improve their alignment by being attentive to the domains of social and emotional development, and approaches toward play and learning.

Public schools have individual student IDs, but they are not required for all students or programs. Massachusetts requires extensive data collection and reporting; from the field they are hearing of a need to streamline collection and inform programs with data.



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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Department of Early Education and Care, Executive Office of Education website.](#)



## Michigan

### Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)

Established in 1985, the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP) was developed to ensure preschool education for at-risk 4-year-olds, and was associated with the state's early childhood initiative, Project Great Start. The MSRP is now called the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). The program has moved from part-day programs toward school-day programs.

Intermediate School Districts (ISD) receive direct financial support, which in turn distribute funds to local school districts and providers in community-based settings to offer GSRP. The level of poverty in each ISD and a funding formula determine overall ISD funding. At least 30 percent of total slots awarded by ISDs must go to community-based organizations, including child care centers and Head Start; guidance has been developed to support these partners.

Public Act 60 of 2013 authorized a substantial increased investment in GSRP and a change in eligibility factors and prioritization. It also replaced state-level competitive GSRP grants with a local level process to include a greater number of public and private community-based agencies providing GSRP, linked GSRP to the State's Great Start to Quality rating system, established a sliding-scale fee for children with household incomes above 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and created a Great Start Readiness Reserve Fund. Prior legislative language allowing GSRP to fund parent education programs was removed.

Prior to 2013-2014, 75 percent of families in the program had to be at or below 300 percent of the FPL. Starting in the 2013-2014 school year, 90 percent of families had to be at or below 250 percent of the FPL. The remaining 10 percent of families with income over the 250 percent of the poverty threshold are required to pay a fee on a locally determined sliding scale. A new legislated prioritization process was put in place for ranking each family's household income into quintiles. The 2013-2014 year was also the first in a three-year transition to roll back the age-eligibility date for GSRP, aligning it with a change in the kindergarten entry date.

In 2013-2014 GSRP served 30,552 children, representing 26 percent of all 4-year-olds. GSRP meets 8 of the NIEER benchmarks. They do not meet the professional development requirement and meals are only served depending upon the length of the program day.

In K-12 education, Michigan ranked very slightly above the US average for per pupil education spending, at \$10,948 per pupil in 2013-2014. Michigan scored very slightly below national averages on math and reading NAEP scores at 4th grade, and had a 77 percent graduation rate, ranking it in the fourth quartile, and well behind neighboring states Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, according to Ballotpedia. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions and ranked Michigan 16th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 75.6 percent of age-eligible children in Michigan were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 74.8 percent attended full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Michigan’s GSRP program meets **11** of these 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **one** other element. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessments	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	●	–	●	●	●	○	●	ND	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Rick Snyder (R) is seen as an advocate for quality early childhood education. The [Children’s Leadership Council](#) of Michigan recognized that the investment in pre-K was an investment in the future workforce. With Gov. Snyder coming from the business world, plus the business community taking note, key players worked with the Governor and Legislature to continue to invest and expand access, more than doubling it in the last two years. In 2011-2012, \$104M was invested; in 2015-2016, \$243M was invested.

In FY 2013-2014, Michigan invested an additional \$65M in GSRP, increasing the number of slots available and increasing the per slot funding by \$225. In FY 2014-2015, Michigan again invested another \$65M in GSRP, though per-slot funding was kept level. Of the total funding allocated for GSRP, a \$10 million special transportation fund for GSRP has been set aside. In both budget increases, 2 percent of funding was specifically earmarked for recruiting and increasing public awareness of GSRP. Cross-ISD boundary enrollment has always been permitted via GSRP policy, but this was legislatively allowed beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, with slot funding following the child.

Michigan is rich in foundations. The W. K. [Kellogg Foundation](#), the [Frey Foundation](#), the [Skillman Foundation](#), the [Colina Foundation](#), and the [Kresge Foundation](#), among others have invested in early childhood policy and programs over the years. A foundation liaison position was implemented in the Governor’s office, under Gov. Granholm, and has been kept in place under Gov. Snyder. The liaison, a couple of staff detailed from foundations help coordinate foundation supports across the early childhood system, as well as other investments that are priorities for the Governor. In addition, there are highly engaged advocacy groups, including [Michigan’s Children](#) and [Fight Crime: Invest in Kids](#). They work together and leverage the foundation contributions.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Office of Great Start (OGS) was developed by Gov. Snyder in 2011 as a division within the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) that could coordinate across state government and across early childhood up to age 8. OGS is led by Susan Broman, a Deputy Superintendent, a position that elevates OGS' relevance within the department and education system. As part of the recent expansion, three additional GSRP staff positions were added, recognizing the need for administrative support. There are now four content experts, a dedicated fiscal monitor, and two analysts, one working with allocations and the other data collection/dissemination and grant systems management. Beyond the core team, there is management and some secretarial support.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** All GSRP lead teachers must have elementary teaching certification with an early childhood endorsement or a BA in child development with specialization in preschool teaching. If training is incomplete, programs may be considered out of compliance but must be enrolled in a training program and in compliance within two years. There is no state salary parity requirement for teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Class size requirement is a maximum of 18 4-year-olds, with a ratio of 1:8.

**Learning time.** Hours of operation range from 3 to 6.5 hours per day, 4 days per week, 30 weeks per year (120 days).

**Two adults in the classroom.** There are at least two adults in each classroom with 9 or more children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The state has comprehensive early learning standards. Training and professional development are offered; curriculum and assessments are aligned to these standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Michigan has a list of approved curricula, which must be research-based, comprehensive, and aligned with state standards. Intermediate School Districts are the grantees, and many of them have chosen one or two options to support in the field. Most are using Creative Curriculum (61 percent) or HighScope (37 percent) and some Reggio Emilia, Project Approach, or Montessori (2 percent). Teaching teams are required to have formal training in using the aligned child assessment tool and curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** Michigan has had standards and overall policy around promoting inclusion, to the extent possible, for least restrictive environment for children with special needs. For state pre-K, it is now in statute that children with IEPs which recommend placement in an inclusive preschool setting, regardless of income, are prioritized for enrollment in GSRP, along with children experiencing homelessness or foster care. There are about 5,000 children who have IEPs in GSRP, among the roughly 38,000 children served.

In preschool special education, under administrative rules in the state, there is a disincentive for inclusionary practices on the funding side. Much more money is provided to serve children with IEPs in segregated classrooms. In inclusive classrooms, administrators have to piece together the different services to be funded.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Michigan identifies and tracks the members of English Language Learners (ELLs) attending preschool; ELL status is one factor in eligibility for the program. Program policies and procedures must promote, support, and respect the home language, culture, and family composition of each child. In addition, materials are provided to parents in the family's home language and professional development on best

practices related to serving ELLs is available to teachers.

The state encourages hiring at least some staff who speak the dominant languages of the community and provides translators for parents. All staff is expected to learn key words from each child's home language. Communication with families must be carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year, and carried out in the parent's primary or preferred language. There are immersion classrooms in some areas (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic) but they are implemented at the local level. According to the US Census Bureau, 9.1 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** Michigan uses the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) to measure quality annually in each classroom. HighScope developed the PQA around the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Pre-K, and has since published and used it nationally and internationally. The PQA covers 63 dimensions of program quality in 7 domains: learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interaction, curriculum planning and assessment, parent involvement and family services, staff qualifications and development, and program management. PQA scores are not available for review.

**Child assessments.** The GSRP implementation manual includes information on the use of formative assessment. TS GOLD and COR Advantage are the two assessments primarily used, with some programs using Work Sampling System (WSS). Teachers are required to have formal training in using the assessment and using results to inform daily practice and for reports for conferences with parents.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Beginning in the 2013-2014 grant year, MDE created a new monitoring tool and cycle for the ISDs as GSRP grantees. MDE monitoring includes a sampling of data from the ISD's sub-recipient program, and administrative and fiscal documentation. An MDE auditor, consultant, or combined team conduct on-site monitoring visits to the ISD to ensure compliance with state policies and program requirements as they relate to fiscal and programmatic management of the grant. Michigan reports that they use monitoring results to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, make adjustments to curricula, and inform and guide instructional planning and teaching practices.

All GSRP providers must attain a 3-star or higher rating in Michigan's Great Start to Quality, the state's QRIS.

Michigan has an extensive history of external program evaluation, including studies by NIEER and HighScope, all of which are included on their website. Studies of Michigan's program include: an ongoing longitudinal study covering kindergarten through high school graduation and grade retention findings (began 1995); a regression discontinuity study of 865 students assessed in pre-K and K (2005); a quasi-experimental/longitudinal study of 403 students in private child care, Head Start, and GSRP (2004-2007); and a mixed methods regression discontinuity and quasi-experimental/longitudinal study of 482 pre-K and 443 kindergarten students followed (2007-2011). Studies since 2004 have measured both child outcomes (direct assessments and teacher/parent reports) and process quality in pre-K and elementary classrooms (independent observation).

**Professional development.** All classroom staff in private programs must complete 16 clock hours per year, of which two can be CPR and first aid training, to keep required child care licenses current. Lead teachers who are certified teachers in public school settings must complete six credit hours or an equivalent number of State Board CEUs every five years to keep their teaching certification current. New lead teachers must complete even more training to renew the certificate the first time. Lead teachers who are in nonpublic school settings may not have

certification and therefore may not need additional hours or equivalent time. There is paid time required for planning and professional development.

An Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) with a Master's in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or a related degree with additional training and experience works with each classroom.

At the beginning of the year, ECSs do a baseline PQA for new teaching teams or review the previous year's results. The ECS observes the classroom periodically, and there is steady and constant system of support, especially for new teaching teams. They discuss progress in meeting goals, other concerns teachers may have, and generally provide support and coaching. It is also part of planning and providing PD. There is some time each day to plan, based on current child interests. Most teaching teams have concentrated time on Fridays, as well as meeting periodically as a group with their ECS.

At the end of the year every classroom has a PQA done by the ECS, who works with the teaching team to go through the results, plan goals, and help plan for the next year. Programs have several goals at the end of year, at least one involving child assessment, to help them raise scores. The state encourages the work in a continuous improvement quality environment.

**Integrated system.** The state does promote a cohesive approach and has aligned the early learning standards, GSRP program standards including staffing and professional development requirements, licensing regulations, and the QRIS system. In addition, the early learning standards are aligned with the approved GSRP curricula and formative child assessment.

The GSRP has the ability to link child assessment data to the K-12 assessments. Because every child in GSRP is assigned a unique identifier, there is potential to track every GSRP child through their school career within Michigan Student Database System (MSDS).

## Key Contacts

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## Minnesota

### Minnesota Pre-K

Minnesota has three programs that support preschool education, though only the Head Start supplement program has met NIEER's definition of state-funded pre-K. Both Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS) programs receive supplemental financial support from the state of Minnesota. Qualifications for financial support are simple; any organization that obtains federal Head Start backing can receive aid. Agencies must always follow the federal Head Start Performance Standards, though they may work in joint ventures with private child care centers, public schools, and family child care homes. The Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, Minnesota's early learning standards, guide support and training for all program staff members and on technical assistance. A second state initiative called the School Readiness Program provides services through subcontracted charter schools, community-based organizations, and school districts. Improving kindergarten readiness is the program focus, and is carried out through a number of approaches. These approaches include services for children with disabilities, home visits, and preschool education programs. Services offered differ from district to district as determined by individual districts. Programs must have research-based content, support parent involvement, collaborate with other local programs, and provide children with appropriate screenings and referrals as needed.

State pre-K children must meet the federal Head Start income guidelines. Effective as of 2007, 35 percent of enrollment may be children whose family incomes are between 100 and 130 percent of the FPL after priority is given to children at or below 100 percent of the FPL. Other criteria for eligibility include homeless families and foster children. Also, families may be income-eligible if they qualify for child care services as a participant in Minnesota's TANF program. Reported risk factors may be considered in prioritizing applicants for enrollment in a limited number of enrollment slots. Agencies may work with their parent council to establish additional priorities. Eligibility can be reassessed if there is a major change in family circumstances, such as income. Children are usually, but not always, allowed to continue enrollment through the end of the program year. In 2014-2015 Minnesota served 1,381 children using these funds.

State funding for the program in 2014-2015 was \$10.8 million, or \$7,824 per child. All spending through this initiative is directed toward Head Start programs and indexed to each agency's federally negotiated cost per child.

Minnesota's Head Start supplement meets 9 of 10 NIEER benchmarks; it does not meet the BA requirement. Otherwise, it meets all Head Start program requirements.

In the 2009-2010 school year, Minnesota was the recipient of a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. Minnesota also just received an IES grant for their Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System and Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System.

In K-12 education, Minnesota ranks slightly below the US average for education spending, at \$11,089 per pupil in 2013, scores above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and a 79.8 percent graduation rate, slightly below than the US average. Minnesota reported slightly higher total public education expenditures when

compared to its neighboring states, Iowa, and Illinois, but about the same as North Dakota and Wisconsin, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Minnesota is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, or strong (the second tier).

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 73.9 percent of age-eligible children in Minnesota were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 75.2 percent were attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Minnesota’s Head Start program meets **nine** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** elements. Although we have noted that there is strong political will, the history of state funding is weak and there is significant opposition. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	●	–	●	●	○	●	●	–	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton (D) is supportive of early childhood education. Minnesota has also had a budget surplus, so although it’s not a funding year, there will be an early childhood proposal. Last year, Dayton proposed a 4-year-old prekindergarten for all children; there was pushback from child care providers concerned about being put out of business, and schools felt unprepared and were worried about space. This time the agency is working with the Governor’s office to host listening sessions in communities and identify needs and concerns. This year the School Readiness funding stream of \$10M per year that funded 334 school districts was increased to \$30M. The state also received added funding for their early learning scholarship program and Head Start.

Everyone is supportive of expanding access and quality, but not everyone is on the same page about how to do it. Art Rolnick promotes a targeted [Early Learning Scholarship Model](#), which puts scholarships in the hands of parents and lets them choose a program. The [Human Capital Research Collaborative](#) is a partnership of the [University of Minnesota](#) and the [Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis](#) to advance multidisciplinary research on child development and social policy, just held a conference on [Sustaining Early Childhood Gains](#). The [Start Early Funders Coalition](#) is a collaboration of more than 20 members of Minnesota’s philanthropic community. [Parent Aware for School Readiness](#) outlines information for parents, including the quality rating criteria for programs, and is funded

by the business community, watchdogs of QRIS. Child Trends is working with the state currently on a major evaluation of the QRIS, which should be released mid-November.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) Early Learning Services Division (Bobbie Burnham, Director) administers pre-K and the RTT-ELC grant. The agency division doubled staffing as a result of RTT-ELC, and is well positioned to cope with scaling up access and quality. The door is open with the legislature, the Governor, business leaders, and foundations.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** A BA is not required in the Head Start supplement or in the other programs. Under the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, all lead teachers were required to have at least an AA by October 2011; by September 30, 2013, 50 percent must have at least a BA. By September 30, 2013, all assistant teachers must have at least a CDA or be enrolled in a program to receive a CDA, AA, or BA within two years. In a public school, teacher union rules require that teachers have at least a BA. There is no parity, except for special education teachers. Minnesota had a very informal survey of early childhood teachers in public schools, and it varies whether they are part of teacher contract or not.

**Adult-child ratios.** The ratio is 1:10 for 4-year-olds with a maximum class size of 20; for 3-year-olds the ratio is 2:17, with a maximum class size of 17.

**Learning time.** Operating schedules are determined locally. Schedules are determined locally, but must be in compliance with federal Head Start regulations. Programs must operate at least 3.5 hours per day, 4 days per week, and 32 weeks per year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** The program does meet the standard for two adults in a room.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Minnesota uses the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress, Minnesota's Early Learning Standards, which were developed in 2003, and last revised in 2005. They are in the process of aligning the standards with the Common Core State Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Programs are required in policy to use a "Research-based program curriculum." The QRIS has a curriculum review committee, and programs must use an approved curriculum to receive a high rating.

**Support for students with special needs.** There is, in schools, a readiness program, early childhood teachers are often special education teachers, and Head Start is very involved in serving children with special needs. There are some initiatives in the state Center for Inclusive Child Care, which works with providers, and delivers support.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Translators or bilingual staff members are available if children do not speak English, and the state authorizing statute requires compliance with federal Head Start requirements. Translators or bilingual staff must be available if 50 percent or more of children in a class speak a language other than English. In the last legislative session Minnesota passed some major legislation from pre-K through grade 12 for strengthening ELL policy, but there has been little time to put it into practice yet. The McKnight Foundation is a strong supporter and will likely be providing assistance.

According to the US Census Bureau, 10.7 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Data from the QRIS validation study on the quality of programs participating in Parent Aware found the following average scores: for the Emotional Support subscale, 5.55; for the Classroom Organization subscale, 5.04; and for the Instructional Support subscale, 2.59. The Instructional Support score is particularly concerning. How any particular sector in Minnesota, such as Head Start, performs, cannot be determined, but scores were not better for top tier programs in the QRIS.

**Child assessments.** Formative assessments are determined locally, but must comply with federal Head Start requirements. Results are used to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, to track child and program level outcomes over time, to provide a measure of kindergarten readiness, to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, to make adjustments to curricula, to track child and program level outcomes over time, and to provide a measure of kindergarten readiness.

As one of the first states to get an RTT-ELC grant developed around implementing a comprehensive assessment system, Minnesota is currently aligning the assessment, including K-3 tools. They have a KEA developed in 2002. The state is in the process of setting up a network of trainers for all the tools around the state. They also have an agreement for a standard rate for approved assessments, so everyone pays the same rate whether school district, Head Start, or child care.

The Minnesota Head Start Association conducts an annual voluntary study looking at program elements alongside child assessment outcomes. Statistical analysis is provided in a format that is immediately useful to teaching staff to create interventions for children demonstrating risks of not being ready for kindergarten by spring.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Data is an area of focus, as Minnesota was just awarded an IES grant for using data. With the LDS grant, they will be working on building their system around assessments and data use. About two-thirds of Head Start agencies have been reviewing data on their own, plus there is a quarterly review for reporting. Data are used to identify children who need supports, and professional development consultants review data and use it to support teachers in classrooms. There are also a number of communities coming together around P-3 to look at results together.

State staff review HS PIR information and enrollment data, conduct additional surveys throughout the year, and review and approve program work plans. The state has also begun reporting kindergarten entrance assessment results through a program called Reading Well by Third Grade.

There has been no formal evaluation of the program, although, as noted elsewhere, Child Trends is evaluating the QRIS.

As of October 2015, 96 percent of the 700 school based pre-K programs participated in Parent Aware (QRIS). Lisa Backer, head of early childhood special education for the state, is using the Inspire Action framework, a tool designed to help ECSE programs evaluate and improve program quality, and ultimately, outcomes for young children.

**Professional development.** PD content is locally determined, in individual programs. In school districts there is some planning time allocated, as in some Head Start programs. The requirement for in-service professional development is 2 percent of total work hours, which is higher than the Head Start requirement of 15 clock hours of professional development per year. By federal law, Head Start staff must follow the highest standard. With RTT-ELC, funding is being used to support CLASS coaches.

Minnesota also has an Early Learning Scholarships Program. The goal of the scholarships is to increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs, in order to improve school readiness for all young children. Priority for scholarships is based on family income, child poverty, and geographic region. Up to \$7,500 per scholarship can be awarded based on meeting certain conditions (but the average seems much lower). It is estimated that approximately 5,700 scholarships per year will be awarded throughout the state. Programs must participate in the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System and may include Head Start, school district prekindergarten and preschool programs, and child care programs. Scholarships are awarded to for up to 12 months. There are two pathways for funding: one goes directly to the family and the other to the program.

**Integrated system.** [Minnesota Management & Budget](#), which oversees all agencies, is working on a prekindergarten brief. Minnesota has implemented [World's Best Workforce](#) legislation related to K-12, and now bringing in pre-K. The state is using results-based accountability, so the agency is currently working with them and all early childhood programs across health, human services, and early education to consider how to measure the impact of the programs.

The Parent Aware (QRIS) system that all programs can apply for aligns standards and assessments and uses CLASS as an evaluation tool.

## Key Contacts

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[Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards](#)

[Early Learning Scholarship Model](#)

[Human Capital Research Collaborative](#)

[Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals](#)



## Mississippi

### Mississippi Pre-K Program

In 2013, the Mississippi legislature passed the [Early Learning Collaborative Act \(ELCA\)](#) that established and funded Mississippi's first state-funded, voluntary Pre-K program. The state invested approximately \$2.9 million into start-up costs, updating classrooms and readying new ones. An additional \$3 million was used in January 2014 to enroll 1,774 children in the Pre-K program.

The purpose of the ELCA is to provide funding to local communities to establish, expand, support, and facilitate the successful implementation of quality early childhood education and development services.

The voluntary Pre-K program is intended to improve quality, increase access to high-quality Pre-K for 4-year-olds, and prepare more children to enter Kindergarten ready to succeed in school. The program provides supports to local programs to improve quality, and families will have access to information about Pre-K quality.

The Pre-K program meets all 10 of NIEER's quality standards benchmarks.

In K-12 education, Mississippi spent \$8,130 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In the 2012-2013 school year, Mississippi had some of the lowest NAEP scores in the country, including 26 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scoring at or proficient in math and only 21 percent in reading. In 2015, Mississippi showed gains in both 4<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading scores on NAEP. Mississippi schools reported a graduation rate of 75.5 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, lower than the national average. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Mississippi ranked 46th overall for union power and influence, or "weakest," which was the fifth of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 81.8 percent of age-eligible children in Mississippi were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 90.2 percent were attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Mississippi Preschool Program meets **four** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **ten** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.



Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessments	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	ND	○	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Phil Bryant (R) is the current governor, re-elected to a second term this past November. He is seen as supportive of early childhood issues, but it is not one of his top funding priorities. He supports Mississippi Building Blocks and Excel by Five.

Through ELCA (SB 2395, 2013), Mississippi established grant funding for qualified early learning programs through a 1-to-1 state tax credit for individuals and businesses who donate to the Pre-K program, resulting in up to a \$3 million state match per fiscal year. The bill was co-authored by Sen. Brice Wiggins and Rep. Toby Barker. For 2013-2014, \$630,918 came from philanthropic matches some from those that had not supported early learning initiatives in the past, including the Gilmore Foundation, Tallahatchie River Foundation, and the Petal Education Foundation.

Some legislators, including Sen. Angela Hill (R), voted against SB 2395, citing concerns about quality and spending limited education dollars on a program that may not have long-term benefits.

The framework for ELCA was developed by Mississippi First (Rachel Canter, Executive Director) in 2012 and outlined in the issue brief "Leaving Last in Line." Mississippi First is an advocacy organization that advances its policy ideas through the policy continuum of research and analysis, public awareness and issue education, advocacy (legislative & administrative), implementation, and evaluation.

This November, there will be two competing measures on the ballot related to K-12 public school funding: Mississippi Public School Support Amendments, Initiative 42, and Alternative 42. Initiative 42 would allow the Mississippi Chancery Courts to enforce adequate funding by state government for public schools. Alternative 42 is similar, but with the stipulation of "under conditions and limitations as the legislature prescribes." There are concerns that if Initiative 42 passes, then there would be state budget cuts across the board, including Pre-K funding. Already, the funding for Pre-K has been flat.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** In 2015, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) within the Office of Elementary Education and Reading in the MDE was established. Eleven pre-K Early Learning Collaboratives (ELCs) were established. ELCs encourage school districts, nonprofit groups, Head Start centers and private child care providers partner to deliver high-quality early childhood education to 4-year-olds in their communities. Each ELC is responsible for designating a Lead Partner, which can be a public school or other nonprofit entity with the instructional expertise and operational capacity to manage an ELC's Pre-K program. Jill Dent, Director of OEC is aware of the monitoring challenges of the ELCs and intends to make changes during the next contracting period. She is knowledgeable about early childhood issues and her experience in state government makes her a strong early childhood leader, capable of implementing the Pre-K program. Jill has a very small staff, one other person.

Recently Dr. Cathy Grace left her position as Director of one of the ELCs to become the Co-Director of the Graduate Center for the Study of Early Learning, University of Mississippi. She has worked in the field of early childhood education since 1972 in many positions in MS as well as nationally. In her new position she will support UM in implementing its newly developed online early childhood curriculum that allows students to specialize in early childhood education and obtain a license endorsement in the field from the MDE. The curriculum was developed with a \$1.1 million grant from the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation to build the program.

Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent, is very supportive of Pre-K, and the Board of Education includes the goal of every child having access to a high-quality early childhood program in its five-year strategic plan (2016-2020).

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Mississippi requires each Pre-K classroom in all settings to have a lead teacher with a BA plus specialized training in early childhood education, which can be a degree in ECE, child development, or equivalent; a degree in any field and at least 12 hours of ECE coursework or equivalent; or a valid license to teach Pre-K. Assistant teachers must have an AA plus specialized training which is defined as having an AA in ECE or an AA in any field and a CDA, Montessori certification, or equivalent. Only pre-K teachers working in public schools receive salary parity with K-3 teachers, as required by state law.

**Adult-child ratios.** Mississippi's Pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 20 children per classroom with a ratio of 1 adult for every 10 children.

**Learning time.** Children attend MS Pre-K five days per week during the school year and services are provided 6-6.5 hours per day. The Pre-K law specifies that the full-day programs must have a minimum of 1080 instructional hours per school year and the entire school day counts towards instructional hours.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults, a teacher with a BA plus specialized training in early childhood education or equivalent and an assistant with an A.A. plus specialized training, are required when there are more than 10 children in a class. If there are fewer than 10 children in the class then only 1 adult is required (how often this occurs is unknown).

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for 4-year-olds (ELS4) were developed and vetted by a diverse task force of early childhood educators including private child care providers, community college and higher education staff, Head Start representatives, and other early childhood education stakeholders. The ELS4 evolved from the 2004 *Early Learning Guidelines* for 3- and 4-year-olds. In June 2013, the ELS4 were approved by the State Board of Education.

The ELS4 align with the NRC Essential Domains of School Readiness and were designed to be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. This includes providing teachers guidance about how to support and make appropriate accommodations for English Language Learners (ELLs) and children with disabilities or developmental delays.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Pre-K classrooms are required to implement a research-based curriculum that is age-appropriate, based on current research and has been proven effective in improving student learning, prepares students for kindergarten, and is aligned with the early learning standards. There is not a system to verify that this occurs and support for implementing curricula is not coordinated at the state level.

There is not an approved list of curriculum models, but there are textbooks recommended by the state's textbook rating committee. The curricula that have been reported as most commonly being used are: Opening the World of Learning (OWL), Creative Curriculum, Galileo, Frog Street, and Big Day.

**Support for students with special needs.** Funded by the Center for Mississippi Health Policy, a pilot study of 1,357 children entering pre-K was formed in order to collect and analyze data on their developmental status. The overall findings from the ASQ-3 developmental screenings revealed that almost 1 out of every 4 Pre-K child screened scored below the cutoff in one or more of the five developmental domains and almost 20 percent scored above the cutoff for overall social emotional well-being on the ASQ-SE, resulting in a referral to a health care professional for further evaluation.

The study also reports that some ELC staff had challenges using the ASQs and noted that staff needed additional training on its implementation and interpretation. In addition, there was variation among how the ELCs collected data and protocols for working with children to strengthen developmental skills.

When children screen positive for a referral, they are referred to Child Find, a component of MDE. Based on the findings of the mentioned study, MDE is currently reviewing Child Find policies and procedures to consider new strategies for assessing and providing services to children who have been identified as needing additional assessment through pre-K developmental screenings.

The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) state funds for special education may be used to support Pre-K programs as matching funds. The federal IDEA funds cannot be used as matching funds.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** There is some support for DLL/ELL students, however there are very few students in each site. In addition those children typically do not all speak the same language. MDE's policy for ELLs includes identifying major issues affecting the education of ELLs and then offering assistance and support to local school districts' efforts in professional development and parent involvement.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** The State currently mandates that Pre-K programs use either an environmental quality or an adult-child interaction assessment. All of the ELCs have been trained on CLASS, and 9 out of the 11 are using it for self-program evaluation. The other two programs are using ECERS. In 2016, MDE will begin to evaluate programs using CLASS or ECERS, but for now the ELCs collect this information themselves.

**Child assessments.** Each ELC is responsible for selecting its own ongoing child assessments. Some report using two to three different ones. The most common tools are Brigance, TS GOLD, as well as assessments that come with the curriculum, such as HATCH. PD on the use of the assessments is determined by each ELC.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The ELCA requires each ELC to provide MDE data so that an annual report can be created. The reported data are reviewed by the Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review. The Joint Committee then submits an independent evaluation to the Legislature and Governor. This process is repeated annually.

Aggregate child outcome data are collected through the Mississippi K-3 Assessment Support System (MKAS2) using Renaissance Learning's STAR Early Literacy assessment and reported annually by MDE. The 2013-2014 average fall

scaled scores, spring scaled scores, and average scaled score gains are reported for each of the 11 Collaborative programs. All of the ELCs reported average scaled score gains. Pre-K data are shared with parents and used to help improve the quality of classroom instruction and determine interventions and services that students need.

Even though the Pre-K program is relatively new, a third-party evaluation was conducted on the use of developmental screenings in the Pre-K.

**Professional development.** Mississippi requires at least 15 hours of annual professional development of all teachers, which must include learning opportunities in early literacy. Each ELC implements a different PD system, which include varying combinations of providing master teachers who mentor, coaching, supporting the attendance at conferences, and providing technical assistance. The ELCs also vary to the degree in which they individualize the PD by using CLASS or ECERS data.

**Integrated system.** There are some consistent system elements in the Pre-K, such as the use of the Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children and the use of ASQ and STAR assessments. Some of the ELCs may internally align their curriculum to their selected formative assessment and content of their PD, but they are not required to do so. It is challenging for MDE to coordinate or establish PLCs among the ELCs, since they are using different curricula and assessments and different approaches to PD.

The KEA and Pre-K child summative assessment, STAR, only measures early literacy and numeracy. However, an optional checklist is being developed to measure kindergarten readiness in six additional content areas: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Science, Physical Development, Creative Expression, and Social Studies.

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## **Resources**

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Mississippi Department of Education: Early Childhood  
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/ESE/EC>

Mississippi First: Prekindergarten  
<http://www.mississippifirst.org/education-policy/pre-kindergarten/>



## Missouri

### Missouri Preschool Program

The Missouri Preschool Program (MPP) began serving 3- and 4-year-olds in early childhood settings in 1998, with the passage of [HB1519](#). The MPP's goal is to provide access to all families throughout the state, regardless of income. In 2013-2014 Missouri served 3 percent of 4-year-olds and 2 percent of 3-year-olds.

The MPP is operated in public schools, private child care centers, and nonprofit agencies. A competitive grant process determines where MPP funds are awarded, though programs serving children with special needs and those from low-income families are given priority. Programs use sliding payment scales, based on criteria including eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch or Department of Social Services income guidelines. State-funded MPP contracts are renewable for up to five years; after this period contracts are made available to other grantees.

Almost 95 percent of children were served in programs operated by the public schools in the 2013-2014 school year. The program expanded from 146 to 157 districts from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014.

The Missouri Preschool Program met 8 out of 10 of NIEER's quality standards benchmarks in 2014-2015. MPP did not meet the meals or monitoring benchmark, site visits are arranged when data indicates a possible need or at other times as resources allow.

In K-12 education, Missouri ranks 30<sup>th</sup> for education spending, at \$9,597 per pupil in 2013. Missouri's graduation rate is above average, at 85.8 percent, and NAEP test scores are at the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions. Their rankings were based on 37 different variables: resources and membership, involvement in politics, scope of bargaining, state policies, and perceived influence. Missouri ranked 38th overall for union power and influence out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, or "weak," which was in the fourth of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 74.6 percent of age-eligible children in Missouri were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 88.3 percent were attending full-day programs.

#### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Missouri Preschool Program meets **nine** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **six** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      – Not Met      ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Funding for MPP declined in the aftermath of the recession, hitting an all time per child low in 2013-2014 in real dollars. Enrollment as a percentage of the population, never more than 5 percent, is lower than in 2002. Recent policy initiatives may be signaling a change. The total state spending for 2014-2015 was \$13.6 million, an increased of more than 73 percent (inflation-adjusted) from the previous year.

In 2014, the Missouri General Assembly passed [HB1689](#) that allows for the prekindergarten attendance hours to be claimed for state aid in unaccredited districts starting 2015-2016 school year and subsequent years, provisionally accredited districts starting 2016-2017 school year and subsequent years and all districts if the Basic Formula Calculation is fully funded. However, the legislature did not increase total funding for state aid to support an increase in enrollment.

Gov. Nixon’s Start Smart Initiative began in 2013 to identify resources to support funding capital improvement projects and start-up costs for early childhood programs. In 2015, \$7 million was made available through a combination of grants and contribution tax credits through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP).

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Missouri has had a long history of leading the discussion on quality early childhood policies and practices. Since 1973, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has been coordinating an annual statewide Conference on the Young Years. Missouri was the first state to develop and implement a quality program accreditation.

In the past two years, Missouri has reorganized the placement of the office within DESE that oversees MPP as well as the positions within the office. Jo Anne Ralston is the Coordinator of Early Learning within the Office of Quality Schools under the Division of Learning Services within the DESE. Jo Anne is active in the early learning community and is knowledgeable about prekindergarten in Missouri. The office is relatively small, three administrators and three supervisors.

DESE is led by Margie Vandeven, Commissioner of Education. Dr. Vandeven is supportive of early childhood education and previously worked as the Deputy Commissioner of Learning Services, the division that includes the office that manages MPP. In 2010 the Department launched its “Top 10 by 20” strategic improvement plan that included as its 2<sup>nd</sup> goal that all Missouri children will enter kindergarten prepared to be successful in school.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies



**Education and compensation.** For a program to receive state funding, regardless of setting, all teachers hired after July 1, 2005 are required to have a Bachelor's degree with specialization in early childhood. All teachers have met this qualifications requirement since the 2010-2011 school year. In addition, a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential has been required since 2008-2009 as a minimum requirement for all assistant teachers in both public and nonpublic settings, in addition to having experience working in a program with young children and their families.

Salaries and benefits of MPP teachers must be commensurate with other professionals in similar positions. The MPP teachers in a public school setting must receive a teaching contract that places them on the same salary schedule as the districts' K-12 teachers. MPP teachers' salaries in nonpublic school settings must be "commensurate with other professionals in similar positions." The Missouri Department of Education interprets this as requiring that teachers in private as well as public programs must receive salaries comparable to those of K-12 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Missouri has a maximum class size of 20 for MPP and requires an assistant teacher if more than 10 children are enrolled, making the adult-child ratio 1:10.

**Learning time.** Programs that are operated by private child care centers or not-for-profits are required to operate a full day program for 12 months per year. Public school MPP can choose to provide a half-day program and operate for fewer than 12 months, but no less than an academic year. Public schools that implement a four-day school week for K-12 can also implement a four-day schedule for the preschool program. In 2013-2014, 68 percent of the MPP classrooms were full day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults are required in a classroom if there are more than 10 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** With the passing of the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993, Show-Me Standards were developed. In 2001 the Department began the process of developing Missouri Early Learning Standards. These standards were developed from 2001 to 2005 and revised in 2009 with support from the early childhood community. The state provides guidance in the form of teacher and parent guides for the domains of: literacy, math, science, social and emotional development, and physical development, health and safety.

The Missouri Early Learning Goals (MELG) were developed from the Missouri Early Learning Standards and added infant and toddler information. The Missouri Early Learning Goals are broad indicators of what children should know and be able to do from birth to kindergarten entry in the following eight domains: approaches to learning; social and emotional development; physical development, health, and safety; language and literacy; mathematics; science; understanding the world; and expressive arts.

In 2014, Missouri lawmakers passed [HB1490](#) that directs changes to the Missouri Learning Standards and creation of work groups to review, revise, and develop recommendations for academic standards for Missouri K-12 students. Once complete, the early learning standards will be aligned as needed.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Currently, four early childhood curricula are approved for use in MPP: Creative Curriculum, Emerging Language & Literacy Curriculum (ELLC), High/Scope, and the Foundations of Project Construct. In order to be selected, the Department reviews the curriculum using a rubric that evaluates the areas of: valid research, evaluation results, professional development, and developmental appropriateness. Teachers receive training that must be approved and delivered by the curriculum source.

**Support for students with special needs.** School districts are required to provide instruction to children with disabilities based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Missouri special education regulations. In 2013-2014, the percentage of children who received special education services in the MPP program was 11.3.

In addition, all MPP children must be provided with an annual health and nutrition screening and a developmental screening. The program must collaborate with the local school district(s) to offer Parents as Teachers (PAT) services to MPP families. These services should include, at a minimum, family home visits, group connections, developmental screenings, and access to the Resource Network.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in MPP during 2013-2014 was relatively small, less than 5 percent of the student population. State policy does not regulate services for ELLs. The ELS parent guides have been translated into Spanish and Bosnian.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** MPP teachers are required to be trained and participate in continuous professional development on the selected curriculum and it must be provided by the curriculum source.

The only direct observation data on teaching quality available for review are from the 2003 study in which 138 MPP classrooms were observed using the ECERS. Average scores for the classrooms during the 2<sup>nd</sup> observation cycle were 5.39, clearly above “good” on the 7.0 rating scale. It is unfortunate that these data are more than a decade old, as they indicate relatively high quality.

**Child assessments.** Following a year of piloting, Missouri adopted the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) as a uniform child assessment instrument. DRDP replaced the process of developing locally determined child learning outcomes to improve instruction.

Lead teachers and assistant in MPP classrooms are required to be trained in the Department-sponsored DRDP trainings. Following this training, teachers and assistants are expected to implement the DRDP as a formative assessment to look at each child’s growth and development to guide learning activities in the classroom.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Program quality is monitored through program record reviews, self-assessments and on-site consultation for all programs. Programs are required to submit an application at the beginning of each program year for renewal. Site visits occur based on a review of submitted reports or concerns raised from partner agencies.

Data collected by DESE, typically self-reported by the program, are used to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, identify programs for corrective action or sanctions, make funding decisions about programs or grantees, make adjustments to curricula, and to provide program staff with technical assistance and/or mentoring.

All MPP programs must obtain Missouri Accreditation (MoA) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation prior to the beginning of the fourth year of operation.

The last independent, third-party evaluation of the Pre-K program was in 2003 when the University of Missouri evaluated MPP in response to a legislative mandate. Key findings included that programs that were rated as less

than good at the beginning of the study made significant gains in improvement including child outcomes and ECERS scores, as previously noted. In addition, teachers with college degrees were in higher quality programs.

**Professional development.** MPP teachers participate in the Learning Communities Project (LCP) that includes on-site consultation and regional professional development opportunities. Teachers are also required to participate in continuous professional development on such topics as the selected curriculum model and the DRDP. Training on the selected curriculum model must be provided by the approved curriculum source, as previously described. Site-based consultations are provided to all classrooms to support program improvement.

In 2012-2013, the minimum number of hours for required professional development was reduced from 22 hours to 12 hours annually, no longer meeting NIEER's quality standard benchmark of at least 15 hours. In 2014-2015, the minimum number of hours of required professional development was restored to 22 hours annually, therefore restoring the benchmark.

Within the annual professional development plans teachers are to attend continuous professional development associated with the selected curriculum model each year. The 22 hours of required PD are the 12 hours of PD required by licensing and 10 hours of regional professional development (DECE provided). Within the 12 hours needed for licensing could be on-going curriculum training in addition to requirements for licensing such as first aid and CPR.

First year teachers and assistants are required additional hours of training, with at least 30 hours of curriculum training. Teachers in new and renewal programs must be trained on the DRDP, the state's adopted early childhood readiness tool.

**Integrated system.** The Early Learning Goals describe broad indicators for children from birth to kindergarten entry in eight domains. Missouri adopted the DRDP as a formative and summative assessment in part due to the alignment to Missouri Early Learning Goals. Professional development opportunities on DRDP are offered and required to all MPP teachers and assistants. The four approved curricula that can be used in MPP classrooms have all met alignment requirements to Missouri's Early Childhood Standards.

## Key Contacts

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## Nebraska

### Nebraska Early Childhood Education System and Grant Program

Nebraska provides preschool education through the public education system using a complex financing system that relies on state and local funding. Local schools have the primary responsibility and 206 of 245 districts now have some program. To pay for start-up costs, programs can apply to the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program. At least 70 percent of awarded grant funding must be used to provide services to children with one of the following risk factors: disability or developmental delay, living in a home in which English is not the primary language, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (185 percent FPL), having teen parents or parents who have not completed high school, and having been born prematurely or with a low birth weight. Direct financial support is available for public schools and education service units that partner with child care centers, as well as Head Start agencies and/or human services agencies.

Grantees are obligated to match 100 percent of the funding using local and/or federal sources. The program monitors child, program, and family outcomes annually. Legislation approved in 2005 required 4-year-olds to be incorporated into the school district state-aid formula. Before students are included in the state aid formula however, school districts must first be approved (meet all requirements of [Rule 11](#)) for three years. Then depending on each district's individual calculated amount from the formula the district may continue to receive a full or partial grant or roll off the grant entirely to receive an even higher amount per child from the state or no funds from the state. Since the legislation passed, there has been a significant increase in the number of children served in state-funded pre-K.

In 2014-2015, Nebraska served 12,073 children, including 31 percent of 4-year-olds and 14 percent of 3-year-olds. Total state funding in 2014-2015 was \$33.3 million with a per child amount of \$2,759 from the state. Funding was increased by 29 percent (inflation-adjusted) in 2014-2015.

The program meets 7 NIEER benchmarks in 2014-2015, missing on teacher in-service professional development, screenings and referrals, and monitoring.

Nebraska enrolls 86 percent of students in full-day kindergarten and spent \$11,579 per pupil on K-12 in 2013, which ranked it 18th highest in the nation, well above the national average and even further above neighbors Iowa and Kansas. NAEP scores are slightly above the national average and similar to those in neighboring states including Iowa. The state's graduation rate was 88.5 percent in 2013 higher than the US average and a bit lower than Iowa, while higher than other neighbors such as Kansas. Nebraska ranked 26th overall for union power and influence, or average. The primary teachers union is the [Nebraska State Education Association](#) (NSEA).

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Nebraska's program has **12** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **two** elements. Within the

state, the Omaha area Superintendents Plan may create a set of districts in which all 15 elements are present. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Nebraska has been making progress in recent years with steady increases in enrollment and funding, though they remain far from fully serving the entire pre-K population. Governor Pete Ricketts (R) took office in January 2015 and has had little time to establish a track record on early childhood. The unicameral legislature has been supportive, particularly the Education and Human Services Committee. In 2011 when the budget was tight, the legislature temporarily moved the grant program to lottery funding so that it would not be subject to cuts. Not only has programmatic funding been increasing, but support for the QRIS and support for staff at the state department of education (to support socio-emotional development in child care) has been provided.

The legislature has set as a universal goal of ensuring access for early childhood education to all 4-year-olds. The State Board of Education is highly supportive, as well, and its Early Childhood study group has proposed preschool expansion, improving the workforce, and building state infrastructure. Also contributing to public will are strong voices from philanthropy and advocacy including the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, First Five Nebraska, Nebraska Voices for Children, and Nebraska AEYC.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** In addition to leadership from the legislature and state board, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has had a strong and stable staff and support from other organizations in the state. The Office of Early Childhood has 22 full time staff positions (not all are currently filled).

The Buffett Institute at the University of Nebraska is taking a leadership role. For instance, the Buffett Institute has worked with 11 Omaha-area school districts to develop and implement a Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan (mandated by the Legislature) to serve young children birth through third grade. In this plan, schools are hubs working with other community organizations to serve more than 4000 children (many in low-income families) with up to 21,000 benefiting. Home visiting is provided birth to age 3 followed by high-quality pre-K for 3- to 4-year-olds and aligned K-3. Six districts are now working on full implementation, while the others receive professional development and technical assistance.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** A BA with an early childhood teacher license is required for teachers, however salary parity between pre-K teachers and K-3 teachers is not required.

**Adult-child ratios.** These are 1:10 and meet the criterion.

**Learning time.** Programs are required to provide at least 12 hours per week. Most programs offer 3.5 to 4 hours per day for 4 to 5 days per week during the school year rather than a full-day 5 days a week.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults are required to be in pre-K classrooms.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Nebraska has comprehensive [early learning standards](#) for developmentally appropriate practice that are currently under revision. They are advisory, not mandatory. However, requirements for program approval are closely aligned with the standards and the state provides training regarding the standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state does not mandate specific curriculum but does provide guidance. In addition, the approval process to establish and obtain funding requires a research-based developmentally and culturally appropriate curriculum. Each program must have a written plan that describes the curriculum. The state also provides training and technical assistance regarding curriculum and its implementation. The [Results Matter](#) system for continuous improvement (QRIS) in which all districts must participate specifically addresses curriculum expectations.

**Support for students with special needs.** Supports are provided under Rule 51 and there appears to be substantial supporting of children with disabilities in mainstream environments. However, specific information on this was not identified. All programs including preschool special education are required to participate in Results Matter.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Curriculum must be culturally appropriate. If a majority of children in a classroom speaks a common language other than English, at least one staff member in the classroom must speak that language. If a minority of children in a classroom speaks a language other than English, a staff member, parent, or other adult in the community to serve as a resource person for those children must be identified. Although Nebraska allocates additional resources for DLL children, it does not require that outreach materials be available in home languages other than English, that DLL children be assessed in their home language, or that teachers have specialized qualifications regarding teaching of DLL children.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** The state provides supports through a comprehensive system for high-quality teaching. The state has three dedicated staff plus a fourth short-term position with each responsible for technical assistance to a specific region. From the approval process to participation in “Results Matter,” guidance and supports for high-quality teaching are provided by the state. Given the available staff, the state prioritizes districts with the least local capacity to support quality teaching for more hands on assistance. Larger districts have Early Childhood Coordinators, and in these districts the state staff work with the coordinators rather than more directly. Results Matter puts in place a system of observation and feedback. The state conducts external observations but does not have the resources to do these more than once every 5 years for each classroom. ECERS-R scores indicate an average of about a 5 with the lower scoring classrooms primarily being newer ones, suggesting that quality is lower during expansion than it will be when the system stabilizes.



**Child assessments.** Participation in the [Results Matter](#) continuous improvement system is required of all programs and training is provided in both the child assessment and program observation. TS GOLD is used by all programs, and a contract with Teaching Strategies supports programs in its use.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Results Matter provides data to the entire system which is designed to inform decision making about individual students by teachers, to inform teachers in their efforts to inform their own practice, to inform districts who are responsible for program quality, and to inform the state in its decision making regarding program approval, guidance, technical assistance, and professional development for the state as whole, regions, and individual districts. The last formal external evaluations of the state's preschool programs were approximately 10 years ago.

**Professional development.** Professional development is provided locally through the Results Matter system. In addition, the state provides professional development directly, through contracts with other organizations, and through events (for example, a 3-day statewide training on quality). The University of Nebraska recently announced plans to hire 13 new Early Childhood Education faculty in specializations that include, for example, administration, coaching, and infant/toddler mental health. There is a strong emphasis on extension work by these faculty members. The [Buffet Institute](#) is an additional professional development resource for the state.

**Integrated system.** The Results Matter system provides the basis for an integrated system of standards, assessment, quality improvement, and service delivery. Nebraska has an active Interagency Coordinating Council and a state Early Childhood Systems Team that implements ICC recommendations and facilitates collaboration between public and private organizations birth to 8 including joint proposals and identifying opportunities to braid funding. This supports substantive integration across agencies and the age span. Higher education is integrated to an unusual degree. The Omaha area Superintendents Plan provides an example of a highly integrated system of services birth through third grade.

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### **Resources**

[2013-2014 State Early Education Report](#)

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Superintendent's Early Childhood Plan](#)



## Nevada

### Nevada's State Pre-K

Nevada's state-funded Pre-K program, initially called the Early Childhood Education Comprehensive Plan when it began in 2001, then called the Pre-Kindergarten Education Program (PEP) is now referred to as Nevada's State Pre-K. It was first funded at \$3.5 million and served 694 children. While student enrollment has grown over the years, state funding has remained stable and in 2014-2015, decreased slightly. As a result, local districts either modify services or supplement state funds. An additional \$1 million in federal Title I funds were used in communities to support State Pre-K meeting State Pre-K requirements, and one county spent approximately \$10 million in Title I for preschool programs not aligned with state Pre-K requirements. Currently, 59 percent of the school districts (10 out of 17) provide State Pre-K funded programs/classrooms.

State Pre-K programs operate in both community-based organizations and school districts. Over 97 percent of the children enrolled in State Pre-K in the fall of 2013 were in public school programs operated by their local school districts. Competitive grant awards are available and funding is determined based on community needs as stated in individual grant applications. State Pre-K aims to provide prekindergarten to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Eligibility is locally determined based on each district's assessment of community needs, but preference is given to 4- and 5-year-olds who will be eligible to attend kindergarten the following year. Children are also prioritized if they are from low-income families, homeless, English Language Learners, or receive special education services. There is not an income requirement.

In 2014, Nevada was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$6.4 million (FY 2014) for the first year, with potential allotments over the next year totaling \$43 million. Plans for the funds include expanding some of the current State Pre-K's daily hours to full-day and increasing State Pre-K enrollment by 58 percent over the next four years, therefore serving approximately 15 percent of the state's 4-year-old population living under 200 percent of federal poverty level.

State Pre-K meets 7 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, missing the benchmark for assistant teacher degree—assistant teachers need to have a high school diploma, or equivalent; meals are not required, but all part-day programs provide at least a snack; and screening and referral and support services are determined at the local level.

In K-12 education, Nevada ranked 44<sup>th</sup> for education spending, at \$8,339 per pupil in 2013. In the 2012-2013 school year, Nevada had one of the lowest graduation rates in the country at 70.7 percent; only two states and the District of Columbia had lower rates. In addition, NAEP test scores were well below the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In their [rankings](#) Nevada was 25th overall for union power and influence, or "average."

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 76.4 percent of age-eligible children in Nevada were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 61.6 percent attending full-day programs.

**Essential Elements**

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Nevada’s State Pre-Kindergarten Education Program meets **eight** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	○	●	—	●	●	—	●	●	—	○	●	—	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

**Rationale**

**Enabling Environment**

**Political will.** Gov. Brian Sandoval (R) was first elected in 2010 and won a second election in 2014. Gov. Sandoval is viewed as being very supportive of pre-K and his initial 2015-2017 biennium budget included flat funding for State Pre-K and increased match for the federal preschool development grant, recently passed. In his January 2015 State of the State Address he referenced Nevada’s recent preschool development grant and vowed to secure matching funding, which he did, in the amount of \$10.3 million. Gov. Sandoval served as Chairman (2014-2015) and Vice Chair (2013-2014) of the NGA Education and Workforce Committee.

The Nevada legislature passed SB 504 (2013) to provide additional support for English Language Learners (ELLs) in pre-K to 4th grade, known as “Zoom Schools.” The state allocated \$4.6 million to support additional pre-K programs for ELL Students in 6 school districts that began implementation in the middle of the 2013-2014 school year. Not all of these programs are aligned with state pre-K requirements due to some of the agreements being made without input from the Office of Early Learning and Development.

The rationale for Zoom Schools and other recent legislation, including SB 486 (2013) that allocated \$1.5 million to pilot Nevada’s KEA, Silver State KIDS, SB 405 (2015) Zoom expansion, and SB 508 (2015), expansion of full-day kindergarten, is linked to ensuring that students can be reading on grade level by 3rd grade. The Read by 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade (SB 391, 2015) bill mandates retention of all students who do not meet 3rd grade reading proficiency, starting in 2019. This bill has received support from local legislators and advocacy groups including [Nevada Succeeds!](#)

There has not been a lot of opposition by local advocacy groups on the “Read by 3” push. Some attribute this to uncertainties as to how the initiatives to support children’s literacy will be funded. There are some concerns about

not including pre-K in this bill, as well as the focus on literacy and not on all areas of children's development and learning. Several of the local early childhood advocacy groups such as Strong Start Nevada, Nevada AEYC, and Children's Advocacy Alliance are more focused on child care issues, such as CCDF funding and the QRIS system for child care, and less on advocating for state funded pre-K.

There have been several opportunities to educate legislators on early childhood research including the Governor's P-3 Symposiums in October 2013 and August 2014 funded through an NGA grant, and two policy briefs released by the Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau on early childhood development and education (2014) and on full-day kindergarten (2012).

Founded in 1985, the Children's Cabinet is a nonprofit agency that provides a variety of early childhood support services and public policy information. The Children's Cabinet in partnership with the NDE has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to expand the Silver State Stars Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The funds will support the implementation of a QRIS and increased professional development for child care programs. It will also provide support for school district pre-K programs and increasing professional development opportunities for educators and administrators across early childhood settings.

Overall, enthusiasm for political leadership in Nevada must be tempered by the very small financial commitments they have been willing to make to early children. Recent increases are sufficient to support only a few hundred children.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** In 2013, Gov. Sandoval created an Office of Early Learning and Development (ELD) within the NDE through an Executive Order. The Office of ELD's funding was approved by the interim finance committee in June 2014 and is responsible for administering multiple early childhood state and federal funding sources including the NV State Pre-K and the Pre-K Development Grant. This reorganization is responsive to input from Nevada's early childhood system stakeholders, providers, educators, intermediaries, private sector partners, and families of Nevada's young children, who collectively called for a more coordinated and aligned system of early learning and development.

This new division lead by Education Programs Director Patricia (Patti) Oya encompasses all of the agencies responsible for overseeing program quality, interagency coordination, early childhood workforce development, and early learning and development standards for publicly funded early learning programs. She has recently expanded her office to twelve people. Patti has a solid early childhood background and has worked within the state overseeing the CCDF Quality Funds.

Under the leadership of Anna Severens (Education Programs Professional), who directly administers State Pre-K, over 13 years of longitudinal data have been collected with the expectation of establishing stronger accountability for achieving improved early learning and development outcomes for children through collaboration with the recently received Preschool Development Grant. Since 2008, Anna has been working on early childhood issues within NDE and is seen as instrumental in pushing Nevada's early childhood agenda.

Jennifer Kalas, Past-President of Nevada's AEYC affiliate, was recently elected to the national NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council where she will serve as President-elect for one year and then assume the role of President of the NAEYC Affiliate Advisory Council. Jennifer has served as Nevada's ECERS and ITERS anchor assessor and has worked closely on the QRIS system.

As of September 2015, the NDE has two interim leaders. Dr. Steve Canavero is serving as the Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction and Janie Lowe as Interim Deputy Superintendent, overseeing the Office of ELD. Both are interim positions and may not be permanently appointed. The previous Superintendent, Dale Erquiaga, now serves as the Chief Strategy Officer for Gov. Sandoval. He is credited with being very supportive of State Pre-K and assisting in Nevada's successful federal Preschool Development Grant application.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Teachers in State Pre-K, whether in public or nonpublic settings, must adhere to the same education and licensing requirements, which is a Nevada Early Childhood teacher's license with an ECE endorsement. A Nevada Early Childhood License (Birth-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade) requires a Bachelor's degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Education, or the equivalent and prior training or experience. In order to get an endorsement, there are various combination of early childhood credits and experience outlined on [NDE's website](#). Assistant teachers must have a high school diploma or equivalent, they are not required to have ECE experience or a CDA. All State Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers in public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules; those working in non-public school settings are not.

**Adult-child ratios.** Class sizes and child/staff ratios follow NAEYC recommendations for 3-year-olds (no more than 16 children with 2 adults) and 4-year-olds (no more than 20 children with 2 adults).

**Learning time.** All state Pre-K programs are part-day programs, due to limited funding. Programs are required to provide services a minimum of 10 hours per week, unless they are funded through the federal preschool development grant, then they must operate 25 hours per week. Most programs operate 4 days per week for 2.5 to 4 hours per day. Local programs determine specific hours and schedule depending on location and track.

**Two adults in the classroom.** The State Pre-K classrooms follow NAEYC guidelines of having two adults in the classroom.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Nevada's Early Learning and Development Standards have been progressing over the past 10 years and comprise two components: Early Learning Guidelines (Birth-age 3) and [Nevada Prekindergarten Standards](#) (Pre-K) (Ages 3-5). The Pre-K Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010, and cover the five NGP domains. An early childhood crosswalk has been completed between the Nevada Pre-K Standards and the Nevada Academic Content Standards based on the Common Core.

State Pre-K teachers are required to implement the Pre-K Standards, and it is up to the district/organization operating the program to provide the training.

[Nevada Ready!](#) is a statewide initiative led by the NDE and NV Board of Education, financially supported by the Nevada Public Education Foundation. NDE is partnering with the Nevada System of Higher Education, local school districts, and public and private organizations to raise awareness and offer implementation supports for the various standards used in NDE, including the Pre-K Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** There is not a statewide curriculum on the Pre-K standards for State Pre-K, but programs must utilize the Nevada Pre-K Standards in their curriculum planning. Programs must also implement a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum. When they apply for the funds, they

describe what they are using or plan to use in State Pre-K classrooms. Most programs report using Creative Curriculum. There is not a statewide system in place to support the implementation of the curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** State and federal law prohibits discrimination based on special needs or disabilities. The newly created Office of Early Learning and Development includes the director of the State Pre-K program who collaborates directly with the 619 Coordinator housed in the Office of Special Education. This has allowed them opportunities to collaboratively discuss inclusion strategies and increase the number of inclusion children. They have been working on supporting the State Pre-K teachers and principals on understanding the benefits of inclusion and with the new federal preschool development grant will have more resources to support their efforts.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In 2012-2013, 44 percent of the children enrolled in State Pre-K were identified as ELLs. In the beginning of the school year, a home language survey is sent home. In order to help support the teachers, professional development or coaching is provided and translators or bilingual staff are available if children do not speak English. State Pre-K information is required to be presented to parents in their primary language.

In 2013, with the creation of Zoom Schools (schools with the highest proportions of ELLs), six counties that offer Pre-K were given additional funds to support ELL students.

Nevada is a WIDA Consortium State and is funded to link all standards for culturally and linguistically diverse students across each measure of early learning and beyond. Currently, the Office of ELD is collaborating with the NDE Title III Office and is working with WIDA to develop a Pre-K developmental screener that is appropriate for DLL Pre-K students.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** ELLCO and ECERS scores are completed and collected biannually by a statewide assessor and evaluator and reported by district as a part of the biannual legislatively required report. The spring 2013 results show that the 13 project sites had a fairly wide range of average ECERS scores across the seven areas, from an average rating of 2.7 to 5.5. Most of the sites (10 out of 13) had average scores between 4.0 and 4.9.

Average ELLCO scores were 3.57 (out of a 7.0 scale) for the 13 State Pre-K sites. The 13 average site scores ranged from 2.3 to 4.2.

**Child assessments.** The State Pre-K sites are not required to use a formative assessment. Each of the 13 districts select which formative assessments they will use, with some using TS GOLD. Other districts report that they have their own self-developed portfolio systems. All of the State Pre-K classrooms use the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-4 (PPVT-4), Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT), and WIDA Early English Language Development Standards (for ELL students) for summative assessments, but some also report using them to guide instruction.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Annually and longitudinally, the effectiveness of the State Pre-K on indicators of the developmental progress of children are collected and reported in [annual early childhood evaluation reports](#). Approximately every six months each project must gather and report data on progress towards meeting project goals and outcomes and Pre-K education program quality indicators. This includes reporting child outcome indicators collected using the PPVT and EOWPVT. Programs must also submit staff qualification information, the status or program goals, program changes, and program improvement plans.



The most recent report evaluated the “Cohort 6” group of children who were 4-year-olds and participated in Nevada ECE during 2008-2009, entering 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in 2012-2013. With a minimum of four months of participation from 3 years old until they enter kindergarten, 84.9 percent of children had an increased standard score and an average gain of 10.7 points on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT); on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT), 86.7 percent had an increased standard score and an average gain of 11.6 points. In 2012-2013, at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, this cohort of students scored significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than a matched group of non-ECE students on the Nevada CRT reading and math.

The Office of ELD staff or contracted specialists perform site observations using ECERS and ELLCO every two years. Prior to 2012-2013, this was done annually.

These data are aggregated and included in the statewide program evaluation system (annual and longitudinal). This information is also reported to the Nevada State Legislature and other entities in order to demonstrate the success of this program for future funding. This information is also used by the Office of ELD to offer technical assistance.

The Nevada state Pre-K program has been part of the longitudinal data system starting in 2002. Student level data are collected twice a year and program quality data every two years (detailed findings were previously discussed). The results from the most recent evaluation indicate that both Cohort 1 (now in grade 6) and Cohort 3 (now in grade 4) scored higher and were more likely to be proficient than the matched comparison groups of children who did not participate in the program on the Nevada CRT reading and math tests.

Funding applications are required every two years for both new and continuing programs. Almost all of the programs have continued to receive funding over the years, with the exception of one district.

Once the QRIS system is finalized, all State Pre-K programs will be required to participate.

**Professional development.** The State Pre-K teachers are required to take 6 credit hours every five years, but that is the only uniform policy. Each of the 13 districts that operate State Pre-K classrooms develops an individual PD approach for the Pre-K teachers. This includes deciding the content and format. None of the programs currently implement a coaching model. There are three Regional Training Programs operated by NDE, but they are primarily responsible for K-12 and focus on the teacher evaluation framework.

**Integrated system.** With the creation of the Office of ELD, Nevada has been able to more easily connect the funding streams that support the Pre-K program. This is especially seen in the areas of blended and braided funding to meet the needs of ELL children. Expectations of connecting the formative assessments, curricula, and PD opportunities to the early learning standards are evident. Nevada is participating in a seven state, federally funded Enhanced Assessment Grant (EAG) consortium to develop and enhance kindergarten entry and formative assessment instruments and procedures.

As the QRIS system is developed there is the expectation that all of the Pre-K classrooms will be required to participate. The vision of how the QRIS system, the KEA, and the PD system are connected is outlined in the [Silver State Strong](#) strategic plan.

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[Office of Early Learning and Development \(official website\)](#)

Silver State Strong: Nevada's early childhood comprehensive system strategic plan (2014-2017)  
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## **New Jersey**

### **New Jersey Former Abbott Preschool Program, Non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA), Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)**

The state of New Jersey funds three preschool programs. The largest and most intensive of the programs, formerly known as the Abbott Preschool Program (Abbott), served 43,177 children in 35 school districts during the 2014-2015 school year. This program was created to comply with the New Jersey Supreme Court's decisions in the landmark Abbott v. Burke school funding case. The New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) funds eligible districts to offer the program to all resident 3- and 4-year-olds. Districts are responsible for ensuring that every child has access to a program that meets state standards, but they are encouraged to do so through a mixed delivery system in which they contract with private child care centers and Head Start programs that meet state standards to deliver services. A majority of children served attend private and Head Start programs. Abbott districts also receive supplemental child care subsidy funds from the state Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide extended-day and extended-year services to eligible families. Changes in DHS eligibility requirements, however, have reduced the number of programs offering wraparound options, resulting in fewer children receiving wraparound services. When the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 put a new school funding formula in effect (which is why they are "former Abbott" districts), a "hold harmless" article was put in place, which prevents former Abbott districts from receiving preschool aid from DOE any less than in the 2008-2009 school year of the program.

The Non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) program is funded for districts in which 20 to 40 percent of children qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. Enrollment in ECPA programs has declined in recent years, despite increased financial support for the third consecutive year. However, several former ECPA districts are participating in the federal Preschool Expansion Grant starting in the 2015-2016 school year. Enrollment increases in these districts over the course of the next 4 years are expected, with additional children and a shift from half- to full-day programs.

The third program, formerly known as the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI), was established in 2004, as part of New Jersey's efforts to offer access to high-quality prekindergarten education to all of the state's low-income 4-year-olds. Initially, all Non-Abbott districts were eligible to apply for funds. However, new districts have been unable to apply in recent years due to limited funds. In the 2014-2015 school year, 24 districts offered the ELLI program to 631 children, an increase over the previous year.

In 2013, New Jersey was one of five states funded in the third round of federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), and was awarded \$44.3 million over four years. In 2014, New Jersey was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$17.5 million annually for four years, subject to Federal appropriations.

In K-12 education, New Jersey ranked fourth highest in the US for education spending, at \$17,572 per pupil in 2013. New Jersey had the highest percentage of students scoring at or above proficient in math and reading at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and had one of the highest graduation rates (87.5 percent), with a dropout rate lower than the

national average of 1.4 percent in 2010-2011. [EdExcellence](#) ranked New Jersey 7<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, or “strongest.”

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 76.5 percent of age-eligible children in New Jersey were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 74.1 percent were attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). New Jersey’s Abbott preschool program meets **14** of the essential Elements and partially meets **one** other; the Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) meets **nine** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** others; and the Early Launch to Learning Initiative meets **10** of the Essential Elements and partially meets **three** elements. It should be noted that practice in the field can vary from what is required by legislation or regulation, for better or worse. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy, but some evidence is available from the DOE’s own studies.

#### NEW JERSEY FORMER ABBOTT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (ABBOTT)

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○

#### NEW JERSEY NON-ABBOTT EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM AID (ECPA)

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	—	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	ND	●	○	●	○

#### NEW JERSEY FORMER EARLY LAUNCH TO LEARNING INITIATIVE (ELLI)

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	●	●	—	●	●	●	●	●	ND	●	○	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Even though New Jersey is ranked second nationally for state pre-K spending, progress in the expansion of expenditures and enrollment stalled beginning with the recession, and in 2014-2015, inflation-adjusted spending decreased by \$19.2 million, or 3.1 percent. Current dollar funding for the ELLI program has been unchanged since the 2008-2009 school year, resulting in a substantial decline after inflation is taken into account.

Thirty-one districts are required to offer the Former Abbott Preschool Program due to a state Supreme Court decision. The remaining four in the “former Abbott” program are required to offer the program after applying to expand their existing program, starting in the 2008-2009 school year. Despite a 2008 legislative mandate (passed before the recession hit state revenues) to expand high-quality, full-day preschool to disadvantaged students across New Jersey, only four districts have received funds to achieve this goal.

In February 2016, bipartisan legislation were introduced to begin the phase-in of the of the existing 2008 law that expanded New Jersey’s high-quality pre-K program in the House ([A-2572](#)) and Senate ([S-997](#)). The two bills offer slightly different approaches to funding the pre-K expansion but both request more than \$100 million from the Property Tax Relief Fund to be distributed to DOE for pre-K. S-997 was referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee (3/3/2016) and A-2572 was referred to the Education Committee (2/8/2016). Neither bill appears to be progressing in the current session, and both have received limited support from Governor Chris Christie (R).

[Pre-K Our Way](#), a nonprofit organization, was recently formed to advocate for the expansion of high quality preschool in New Jersey. The leadership of this group includes former New Jersey governors and business leaders. It has partnered with both local and national foundations. The [Advocates for Children of New Jersey](#) (Cecilia Zalkind, Exec. Director) has also been active in advocating for preschool quality and expansion.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** All three of New Jersey’s preschool education programs operate under the auspices of the state DOE, Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) (Ellen Wolock, Director) which has 16 senior professional staff. The Department of Children and Families oversees licensing of private preschool providers. DHS, Division of Family Development oversees the before- and after-school portion of the preschool program. Coordination occurs with the Head Start State Collaboration Office, which is housed in DOE. The Departments of Education, Children and Families, and Human Services work together on state and federally funded initiatives and they work with others in the state through the New Jersey Council for Young Children.

Before Dr. Wolock was the Director of DECE, she assisted in the development and implementation of New Jersey’s Abbott preschool program, including the design of program and learning standards, assessments and program evaluation.

The state has other strong leaders in early childhood within the Department of Education as well as in other agencies, higher education, private provider organizations, the public schools, Head Start, and philanthropy. In the Department of education, Karin Garver, Director for the Office of Academic Initiatives and Fiscal Responsibility at the NJ DOE, participated in the first cohort of the CELO Leadership Academy, and, Vincent Costanza is Executive Director of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. Other NJDOE early education experts are responsible for programs serving children with special needs.

In New Jersey, each school district's superintendent along with any designated school district personnel is assigned the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the state-funded preschool programs. [Preschool program guidelines](#) specify that in "school districts with greater than 750 enrolled preschool children at least one dedicated in-district early childhood supervisor is provided." These supervisors must have appropriate New Jersey Supervisor's Certificate or New Jersey Principal's Certificate, as well preschool education experience.

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Both Abbott and ELLI require salary parity with K-12 for teachers and teacher assistants in both contracted center-based programs and public schools. They are also given the same amount of planning and professional development time as K-3 teachers. Additional supports for lead and assistant teachers are locally determined. ECPA teachers are only provided salary parity when located in a public school. All three programs require a BA with certification.

**Adult-child ratios.** All three New Jersey programs meet the requirement for class size and ratios; ECPA has a maximum allowed teacher child ratio of 1:9, ELLI's ratio is 1:10, and Abbott's ratio is 2:15.

**Learning time.** Abbott programs must operate for at least 6 hours. Some programs offer extended-day programs with an additional 4 hours of wraparound care to income-eligible children. The wraparound program is funded through DHS. Of the 43,177 children in school-day programs, DHS reported 4,816 in wraparound programs as of June 2015.

ECPA Districts may offer either a half-day or full school day program. DHS funding may be used in some cases to extend beyond a full day for income-eligible children. Some school-day children may receive extended-day services, but the number of students is unknown. The DOE funds the program for the school calendar year. If the district/provider runs a wrap-around program through DHS, the program would then extend services for the full calendar year.

Some ELLI programs are part-day, some programs are school-day, and some programs offer a combination of both. Some programs participate in DHS wraparound programs for before- and after-care. The DOE funds the program for the school calendar year. If the district/provider runs a wrap-around program through DHS, the program would then extend services for the full calendar year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** All three programs require two adults in the classroom.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** [New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards](#) were revised in 2014. They are comprehensive and aligned with K-3 standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Pre-K programs must align their curriculum with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. The curriculum must also be inclusive of all students; be research-based; rely on child initiation and engagement; be developmentally appropriate; and show evidence of benefits. The four approved curriculum are: Creative Curriculum, Curiosity Corner, HighScope Preschool Curriculum, and Tools of the Mind. Coaching, described later, supports the implementation of the curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** Preschoolers with disabilities are also included in pre-K programs. New Jersey has a Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) that supports preschool teachers in addressing children's challenging behaviors. They assist in the development and implementation of an intervention plan and positive behavior support plan and use the Pyramid Model and Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) from the [Center on](#)

[the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning \(CSEFEL\)](#). Teachers are also supported in helping children through the referral process.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** New Jersey’s funding formula for preschool includes funding for services to children who are considered to be dual language learners (DLLs). Data on home languages of children enrolled in all three programs are included in the state preschool database on home language, ethnicity, and migrant status. In order to best serve DLLs, both teachers and program administrators are required to possess qualifications for working with DLL children and families. All three programs provide recruitment and enrollment materials in the family’s home language. In addition, ELLI uses home language as eligibility criteria. Thirty percent of New Jersey’s 3- and 4-year-olds are DLLs.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** The Abbott program has been evaluated over the years. In 2000, the average ECERS-R score was 3.9. By 2008 it had risen to 5.2. Other assessments used to measure the quality of practice specific to literacy and mathematics revealed a similar pattern of low starting point and considerable progress. The other programs do not have CLASS or ECERS scores for review.

**Child assessments.** The [preschool program standards](#) explain “the primary purpose of the assessment of young children is to support learning and help educators determine appropriate classroom activities for individuals and groups of children.” TS GOLD was piloted in districts in 2013-2014. The first cohort began in 2014-2015 with statewide implementation anticipated to be complete within 5-6 years.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** All of the preschool programs participate in the DOE’s Self Assessment and Validation System (SAVS), a process that is expected to be completed annually. The self assessment and validation process examines the total program including teacher-child interactions, curriculum, and health and safety. Monitoring information is not used to make decisions about whether or not to fund a district/program, but rather to guide the review of districts’ proposed annual budgets. QRIS participation is encouraged, but is not currently required. Every county has an assigned DECE staff person for support.

Only the Abbott program has been evaluated. The most recent [evaluation](#) is part of a longer-term follow-up of preschool students. Participation in the Abbott program was found to reduce grade retention. At this point of the study, by grade 5, the effect of two-years of pre-K beginning at age 3 had larger persistent effects on achievement than did one year of pre-K. An earlier [evaluation](#) of this cohort, found that the Abbott program was found to increase achievement in language arts and literacy, math, and science and the effects were large enough to close at least a quarter of the achievement gap with one year and 40 percent with two years of pre-K by second grade.

**Professional development.** Each school district is required to submit an annual district-wide preschool professional development plan based on the school district’s long-term preschool through third grade vision. The plan is expected to be research-based on the best adult learning practices and include information gathered from a formal needs assessment. The plan should include in-service workshops as well as mentoring and peer coaching. The plan should also include steps to evaluate the effectiveness of each professional development strategy.

Master teachers (coaches) are assigned to visit classrooms on a regular basis and provide feedback to teachers to improve teaching practices, coach on formative assessments (including TS GOLD), and provide individualized feedback and support to the teachers. Master teachers have a caseload of 20 schools. Program standards provide



recommendations and policies for using structured observation instruments for coaching. Teacher in-service requirements are 100 clock hours per 5 years.

**Integrated system.** All three preschool programs in New Jersey operate within NJ DOE under the auspices of DECE. DECE is responsible for the development, implementation, and alignment of program components with a focus on standards, curricula, and assessment. All three preschool programs use the same set of program and child standards and have been supported using TS GOLD. DECE has programmatic responsibility for preschool through 3rd grade programs.

The [New Jersey State Longitudinal Data System](#) (NJ SLDS) was created in 2012, through a grant from the USDOE. NJ SLDS is building upon the state's current data system and making it a more comprehensive statewide system that tracks student information from pre-K through entry into higher education and the workforce.

## Key Contacts

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## **New Mexico**

### **New Mexico PreK**

State-funded New Mexico PreK (NM PreK) began in the 2005-2006 school year with the enactment of the PreK Act of 2005. NM PreK is supported exclusively through state funds and is jointly administered by the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD). PED is responsible for funding and monitoring NM PreK programs provided through school districts and CYFD for those programs operating in community-based organizations and other eligible providers. Both departments are coordinated so that the all NM PreK programs, independent of setting, adhere to the same set of standards and participate in the same quality tiered quality rating system (FOCUS).

In 2014-2015, approximately half of the 8,397 children were enrolled in public school programs, with the other half in nonpublic sites, such as community child care centers, Head Start programs, faith-based centers, family child care homes, and centers operated by municipalities or universities.

Following a significant decrease in enrollment during the 2010-2011 school year, participation increased by 44 percent in the 2013-2014 school year, the third consecutive year additional children have been served. For the second consecutive year, 10 additional school districts offered the NM PreK program in 2013-2014, making the total number of school districts 54 out of 89 (61 percent). In 2013-14, 27 percent of 4-year-olds were served.

The 2013-2014 NM PreK budget increased to \$27.2 million, from \$19.2 million the previous year. In 2014-2015, the state budget increased 43 percent, which is a remarkable rate of progress, though it still leaves state funding at about only \$40 million per year.

A competitive process awards program support, though preference is given to programs in communities with public elementary schools designated as Title I. Two-thirds of enrolled children at each program site must live in the attendance zone of a Title I elementary school, though eligibility is not determined by a specific family income requirement.

In 2014-2015, a full-day pilot was operated. In 2015-2016, 44% of children enrolled in NM PreK attended a full-day program.

New Mexico's pre-K program meets 8 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks. The two standards that were not met were those for teacher and assistant teacher degrees. Teachers in public school are required to have a Bachelor's degree, however teachers in nonpublic school settings should, but are not required to have one. Assistant teachers in both public and nonpublic settings are expected to have an AA in early childhood education, but may be hired without an AA with an approved professional development plan and take at least 6 college credits annually toward the requirement. New Mexico offers an Education Assistant certificate for P-12 in public settings only.

New Mexico was one of five states to receive funding in the second round of the federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) in 2012.

In K-12 education, New Mexico ranks 38<sup>th</sup> for education spending, \$9,012 per pupil. In 2013, New Mexico’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP scores were below the national average in both reading and math and its graduation rate was below the US average. New Mexico had the highest percentage (60 percent) of Hispanic students in public schools in the country during 2013. It was one of five states that had a greater percentage of Hispanic students than white students. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In their rankings New Mexico was 37<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "weak."

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts report, *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 76.8 percent of age-eligible children in New Mexico were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 74.2 percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The New Mexico Preschool Program meets **11** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	○	●	—	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Susana Martinez (R) has been consistent in her support of NM PreK. There has been a steady increase in funding of the NM PreK since 2011 and an emphasis on incorporating quality and supporting it in the NM PreK, and the 2013 NM Legislative Finance Committee Report stated that early childhood care and education was a priority. A three-year funding plan projected a steady increase in NM PreK appropriations. This priority was reiterated in 2014 and the need to extend the hours of NM PreK was acknowledged, resulting in an additional \$8.4 million being appropriated in FY2015.

US Sen. Tom Udall (D) has been supportive of early childhood issues and hosted a discussion on improving child wellbeing in New Mexico, examining what can be done at the federal level to help families out of the cycle of poverty. In 2015, he joined several senators in introducing legislation to expand access to high-quality early learning programs with the Providing Resources Early for Kids Act (PRE-K Act).

Even though New Mexico's federal preschool development grant application was not successful, it was supported by the chair of New Mexico's Legislative Education Study Committee, the Senate Education Committee, and the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee.

Alliance for Early Success works with states to bring together funding partners and improve state policies for young children. The New Mexico Early Childhood Partnership works with New Mexico Voices for Children and the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children to develop funding strategies to increase general state funding and alternative funding streams, increase knowledge about the true costs of implementing quality early childhood programs and services, and develop recommendations for an early childhood governance structure in New Mexico. The lead for NM is Katherine Freeman.

NM Voices was founded in 1987 by a group of pediatricians and is a nonpartisan, statewide advocacy organization working on numerous early childhood systems initiatives. NM Voices' 2014 policy agenda included advocating for education and early learning and care, but not specifically NM PreK expansion or funding.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** As previously noted, NM PreK is jointly administered by two large state agencies, PED and CYFD. There is not one person or department identified to oversee the coordination and adherence to NM PreK standards. Expectations for collaboration are described in both PED and CYFD's administrative rules.

Both departments have pre-K advocates and early childhood expertise. Both Hanna Skandera the Secretary of PED and Monique Jacobson the Secretary for CYFD are viewed as supportive of NM PreK. Brenda Kofahl, PreK Program Specialist for PED, and Dan Haggard, Deputy Director, Early Childhood Services, CYFD are both viewed as strong early childhood leaders who have first hand expertise in the practice of early learning and research-based practices.

The New Mexico Business Roundtable (NMBR) is committed to improving education systems and practices and its 2015 legislative priorities include supporting the implementation of the RTT-ELC and expansion of early childhood programs through new state revenue funding. For the past year, NMBR has been discussing PreK infrastructure and expansion issues, including New Mexico's Land Grant Permanent Fund.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Lead teachers in NM PreK programs housed in public school must have a Bachelor's degree and licensure in early childhood education. Teachers who have an elementary education or special education license are required to annually take a minimum of 6 credit hours of early childhood education coursework. Teachers in nonpublic school settings should, but are not required to, have a Bachelor's degree and are required to take at least 6 college credits annually with an approved professional development plan to complete the degree in early childhood education if they do not already have one.

Assistant teachers in both public and nonpublic settings are expected to have an AA in early childhood education, but may be hired without an AA with an approved professional development plan and take at least 6 college credits annually toward the requirement. New Mexico offers an Education Assistant certificate for P-12 in public settings only.

Teachers and assistant teachers in the public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules, with no compensation requirements for those in nonpublic schools settings.

**Adult-child ratios.** NM PreK has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

**Learning time.** Schedules are determined locally, but the majority of programs operate 2.5-3.5 hours daily for 5 days per week with state funding paying for 450 instructional hours per school year. During 2014-2015, some of the part-day classrooms piloted a full-day, 900 instructional hours school year, which served 1,765 NM PreK students.

**Two adults in the classroom.** NM PreK adult-child ratio must be no greater than 1:10, with one lead teacher and one educational assistant if the group size is 11 or more. Itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Kindergarten (NMELGs) were updated in the summer of 2014 and are currently being validated by WestEd. The NMELGs encompass all five essential domains of school readiness, are developmentally appropriate, and contain rubrics that link the ELGs to child development and skill acquisition. Once complete, they will form the basis of NM's forthcoming statewide KEA.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** NM PreK does not require a specific curriculum, however it does require that programs implement the New Mexico Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Development Process developed by Dr. Betsy Cahill, NM State University and Dr. Rachel Theilheimer, CUNY. It is reported that most NM PreK programs use the Creative Curriculum, in which teachers receive embedded classroom observation and support.

**Support for students with special needs.** School districts are required to provide instruction to children with disabilities based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and New Mexico's special education regulations. Children attending NM PreK in nonpublic school settings are provided the same opportunities of special supports, and all programs agree to implement the Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children, Birth through Age Eight, in New Mexico's Early Learning System.

Some NM PreK programs have been inclusive from the beginning, providing therapies in the classroom. With the support of the RTT-ELC grant, more have become inclusive. A capital outlay award transformed three small special education classrooms into one inclusive NM PreK, and a conference to train school administrators and special education teachers is being planned. There are still some districts that provide services separately in "hubs."

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In the absence of state legislation or policy regarding provisions for ELL families in NM PreK programs, the PED through the Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau and the NM PreK Program Standards provide guidance on effective practices and program requirements to all programs receiving state pre-K funding. Funding is used to support monolingual Spanish and dual-language classrooms with information submitted in the program's application to state agencies.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** NM PreK classrooms are required to conduct self-assessments using the ECERS. Principals are required to attend at least one ECERS training and those responsible for evaluating PreK teachers, every 3 years. The public school NM PreK classrooms must achieve a minimum average score of 5.0 on both of the ECERS scales. The scores are available to the administrators and the legislative finance committee and in the previously mentioned 2015 review, it was reported that NM PreK environmental quality ratings have declined since 2010, but the actual scores were not available for review. Currently, CLASS use is not required.

**Child assessments.** Currently, NM PreK teachers are required to observe children twice a year using the New Mexico PreK Observational Assessment and collect documentation for 25 Essential Indicators. Child-level data are used to make adjustments to curricula, provide program staff with technical assistance and/or mentoring, make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program, and to provide feedback to parents. Teachers are trained to implement the NM PreK Observational Assessment in a two-day face-to-face training, and receive follow-up training annually. A video training program was developed to support teachers in a variety of assessment topics including understanding how to document child observations, recording methods, developing portfolios, and reporting requirements.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Since 2011, New Mexico has participated in the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative on implementing a cost-benefit analysis approach to help decision makers invest in policies and programs that are proven to be effective. As a result of this effort, the NM Legislative Finance Committee is able to use data to prepare cost-benefit reports and make data-informed decisions about the NM PreK.

The NM PreK database maintains a variety of program information and demographics that are used to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, identify programs for corrective action or sanctions, and make funding decisions about programs or grantees.

The New Mexico PreK program will be required to participate in the new FOCUS quality rating system as part of the RTT-ELC grant. The program is currently being piloted. In addition, ECERS training is required in the first year of participation and every three years thereafter.

The New Mexico Prekindergarten Research Alliance is examining factors related to improving the quality and effectiveness of NM PreK and its impact on school readiness and third grade success. REL Southwest is currently conducting several studies, including one that examines NM PreK participation patterns by student demographics and another that identifies differences in kindergarten readiness by different student subgroups, including those who attended NM PreK.

The most recent completed third-party evaluation, which was mandated by the state, was the 2010 NIEER report, The New Mexico PreK Evaluation: Results from the Initial Four Years of a New State Preschool Initiative, concluded that the NM PreK produced consistent benefits in language, literacy and math. The study employed a regression discontinuity design (RDD), and estimated impacts were similar to those in other studies using RDD approaches including Tennessee. PreK classrooms were above average in terms of general quality, rating good on the ECERS-R. However support for early literacy and language was just fair and support for mathematics was poor.

**Professional development.** Since its inception, NM PreK has set aside a portion of the funds to address quality and improvement, including: TEACH scholarships; monthly coaching and consultation by the University of New Mexico Continuing Education program, establishment of four regional training and technical assistance programs, and staffing of the PreK Program and Managers and Monitors within both PED and CYFD.

Each NM PreK teacher and educational assistant has a current professional development plan in place, with professional goals and timelines that are NM PreK specific. These plans must be completed or updated no later than October 1 of the current year. Ongoing documentation of the completion of credit hours towards required degrees/licensure/certification is recorded on administrative reports and added to the PreK database. Staff must document the activities that increase their knowledge, specialization, and qualifications in early childhood



education, individualization, and family support. In addition, NM PreK personnel benefits must include at least two hours per week for planning and classroom preparation.

Each NM PreK teachers has a consultant who conducts a monthly visit for a half-day session and 30 minute debrief. Coaching is provided through a contract with [UNM Continuing Education, New Mexico Kids Network](#). These regionally based consultants provide observation, modeling, coaching, and feedback on the *New Mexico PreK Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Planning Process* and the classroom environment. The consultants also hold specialized trainings for a site, or a program with multiple sites, based on need.

**Integrated system.** The NMELGs provide the foundation for the alignment of all of early childhood system components utilized by NM PreK and is outlined in the newly revised quality rating system, [FOCUS](#) The NMELGs provide the criteria teachers use in their authentic observation, documentation, and curriculum planning process. Their observations are recorded in the child assessment tool that will be aligned to the statewide KEA that is currently being developed by WestEd, who is also validating the NMELGs.

The NM PreK Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) is a web-based database that supports the required authentic observation and assessment of children and its use during curriculum planning. CAS also tracks developmental screening, formative child assessment, and environmental quality assessment. Once the KEA is completed, there are plans to include its data in CAS.

When children enter NM PreK they are assigned a unique identifier that is in line with the K-12 identifiers assigned to older students. NM has a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS).

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## Resources

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[New Mexico preK Invest a Little Get a Lot: New Mexico's Preschool Program Standards for School Year 2015-2016](#) [for use in CYFD operated programs]

New Mexico Public Education Department: Literacy and Early Education Bureau [website](#)

State of New Mexico: Children, Youth and Families Department: New Mexico PreK [website](#)



## New York

### New York Universal Prekindergarten (UPK)

New York's preschool program began in 1966 as the Experimental Prekindergarten Program (EPK) with the goal of offering preschool education to all 4-year-olds in the state. In 1998, it was merged with a 50 percent increase in funding to become New York's Universal Preschool Program (UPK). While all 4-year-olds were eligible to sign up, only a small number of children were being served. In 1997, the New York State Legislature voted to make universal preschool available to all by the 2002-2003 school year, though insufficient funds prevented additional eligibility and most programs were operating on a half-day schedule. In 2013, UPK served a few more than 19,000 children in full-day programs and an additional 40,000 in half-day. A compromise between Mayor Bill DeBlasio and Governor Andrew Cuomo allowed the program to expand in January of 2014, serving 65 percent of school districts and close to 100,000 children, or 44 percent of the total population.

In New York City, 2015 will mark the largest expansion of public preschool of this kind in the country, with 65,000 four-year-olds attending and Mayor DeBlasio delivering on his promise to offer full-day preschool to every 4-year old in the city. UPK requires at least 10 percent of district funding go to subcontracting with community-based organizations (CBOs) including Head Start, child care centers, preschool special education providers, and nonpublic nursery schools. Slots are assigned by lottery, with most students enrolled attending part-day programs five days per week.

UPK is fully funded through a recurring formula based, non-competitive grant. Money is allocated through the state and funding is available to districts that previously offered the program. Per-child spending was approximately \$3,820 in 2014, well below the \$5,372 set in 2002. During the 2013-2014 school year, spending for the UPK program increased by \$4.8M following a decrease by \$8M in 2012-2013.

The 2014-2015 school year marked the first year of the state's new program, the Statewide Universal Full-Day Prekindergarten Program (SUFDPK), which uses \$340M in 53 school districts and 26 community-based organizations to provide half-day prekindergarten services to 36,680 4-year-olds. In 2014, the state was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$25M, which is used in five school districts and serves 1,127 4-year-olds from families at or below 200% federal poverty level. Overall, with the addition of the Priority Prekindergarten and Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K grants, the state increased its funding for prekindergarten programs an additional \$364M from the previous year.

New York's UPK program earned 7 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2013-2014 school year according to the 2014 State of Preschool Yearbook. The state does not require a CDA for assistant teachers, though they do require a Level I Teaching Assistant Certificate. Site visits are based on criteria established by the Office of Early Learning such as districts with elementary schools on the Persistently Low Achieving Schools list, though periodic site visits are not assured for each program.

According to the *NAEP National Report Card*, New York students score above proficient in grade 4 in reading and at proficiency in math. Graduation rates are slightly below average compared to the rest of the country.

New York does not require districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs. The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts report, *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 79 percent of age-eligible children in New York were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 79.1 percent were attending full-day programs. New York’s teacher’s union ranked ninth overall for union power and influence in a 2012 Fordham University [Study](#). The main teacher’s union in New York is the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA).

**Essential Elements**

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). New York’s UPK program meets **four** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **seven** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Proven Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	—	●	—	●	●	—	○	○	ND	○	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met      ○ Partially Met      — Not Met      ND Not determined

**Rationale**

**Enabling Environment**

**Political will.** Governor Cuomo (D) is a proponent of preschool, advocating quality early education as critical for long-term success. Under the Governor’s administration, the state committed to investing \$1.5 billion over five years to build the Statewide Universal Full-Day Preschool Program. In addition, the Governor’s [New York Education Reform Commission](#) recommended the Governor pass the [2015 Opportunity Agenda](#), which allocated \$30 million to expand preschool programs in communities across the state for 3,295 three- and four-year-olds. Though the legislature continues to be moderately supportive of preschool initiatives, in 2014 SB 6356 passed, funding districts for full-day preschool slots and establishing provisions for a preschool-12<sup>th</sup> grade data system. Gov. Cuomo [proposed](#) \$800 million in total funding to local community budgets, bringing the state contribution to 100 percent, in an effort to ensure that participation in pre-K moves from 60 percent to 100 percent. In his 2016 State of the State address, Governor Cuomo allocated \$5 million to QUALITYstarsNY (NY’s QRIS).

In New York City, Mayor DeBlasio (D) demonstrates strong political will to provide access to high quality preschool to all 4-year-olds, so much so that his competing strategies with Governor Cuomo as to how to fund such a large-scale program became headline news for much of 2014. Though Mayor DeBlasio did not get what he asked for, an income tax increase to fund universal preschool, ultimately, Governor Cuomo’s \$300 million dollars in state

financing towards preschool enabled the program to offer over 30,000 full-day seats in its first year of operation and has doubled those seats as the program expanded.

The Board of Regents has called for Pre-K services for 3-year-olds based on studies showing two years of early education to be more effective than one in preparing children for school. The proposal has a precedent in the state's earlier Targeted Pre-K program, a school-based initiative for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** UPK is administered by the Office of Early Learning (OEL), within the New York State Department of Education (NYSED). OEL (Betsy Kenney, Director) is tasked with implementing over \$800 million per year in State and Federal grants for prekindergarten programs including UPK and the Voluntary Registered Nursery Schools and Kindergartens. Betsy oversees a staff of 13 people.

At the New York City Department of Education (NYCED), Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña helped to champion Mayor DeBlasio's Pre-K for All campaign and plans to close the achievement gap starting with early learning. In the Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) Executive Director Sophia Pappas was charged by the Mayor to help with implementing the universal preschool program and integrate preschool into a P-12<sup>th</sup> grade system. The Center for Children's Initiatives, under the direction of executive director Nancy Kolben, and director of policy Betty Holcomb, provides specialized training and technical assistance to programs serving birth-through-school-aged children. New York also participates in the [BUILD Initiative](#), which supports early childhood systems development through intensive technical assistance.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** New York requires teachers to hold a Bachelor's degree as well as a teacher specialization certificate. Assistant teachers are not required to have a CDA or equivalent, but rather a Level I Teaching Assistant Certificate, allowing them to provide direct instructional services to students under the general supervision of a licensed and certified teacher.

New York City public school preschool teachers are part of the city teachers union and on the same salary scale. Community-based organizations are represented by daycare or Head Start unions and do not receive salary parity with public school teachers.

In New York City, community-based organizations continue to face salary benefit disparities, even after receiving \$16.9 million from the administration in 2014 to resolve this issue. Starting salaries continue to be behind that of DOE preschool teachers, though 60 percent of the city's free preschool seats are located in community-based sites and teachers may hold the same credentials.

**Adult-child ratios.** New York has a maximum class size of 20 for both 3- and 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio requirement of 1:9 for 4-year-olds. A classroom composed of entirely 3-year-olds would have a 1:8 adult to child ratio. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** UPK operates 5 days per week during the school year and services are provided at a minimum of 2.5 hours per day. This is less than the Essential Element criteria of 6 to 6.5 hours per day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with early childhood specialization and an assistant are present at all times during the 2.5-hour education program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core were adopted in 2011, by the State Board of Regents. The original version, the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards, aligned with both the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English language arts and literacy as well as mathematics and the New York State K-12 learning standards in science, social studies, and the arts. In an effort to provide a clear, consolidated resource, the Prekindergarten learning standards were revised to fully encompass the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, resulting in the Foundation for the Common Core.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** New York does not have a statewide curriculum for any grade level.

**Support for students with special needs.** NYSDE actively promotes inclusive settings for children in UPK. When preschool students with disabilities are enrolled in a preschool program, The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) may recommend several services upon reviewing the child’s IEP. Services on site can include special education, itinerant services, and a special class in an integrated-setting program.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** According to the U.S. Census, in New York City between 2009 and 2013, 48.8 percent of persons age five years old and over speak a language other than English at home. There is no state-level policy regulating services for dual language learners enrolled in UPK. However, the state does support professional development opportunities regarding best practice through the New York State Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks. NYSED provides ELLs with appropriate educational settings such as a bilingual classroom or integrated English as a second language (ESL) program. Additionally, incoming preschoolers are screened and assessed in their native language and in their progress toward English proficiency.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Structured observations of classroom quality are required, but the method is determined locally. Many districts use ECERS or CLASS annually, but scores are not reported publicly.

**Child assessments.** School districts participating in UPK are required to assess students on an ongoing basis to inform instruction and track program effectiveness. However, assessment tools are locally determined.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The Quality Assurance Protocol was developed to help ensure comprehensive and consistent monitoring of program quality in providers of full-day pre-K programs. A visit occurs in which full-day programs are observed and documents are reviewed to complete an assessment on a five-point scale, ranging from “non-compliant” to “excels” on facility quality; curriculum; learning environment, materials, and supplies; family engagement and support; staffing patterns, teacher education and experience; community partnerships; program oversight and fiscal management; screening and assessment; and the children’s physical well-being and health.

According to the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, beginning in the 2008–2009 school year, school districts were required to report the percentage of pre-kindergarten children making gains, based on assessment data. The data are made available to parents and/or guardians of pre-kindergarten children and to the public. Data are collected at both the child and program level to inform decision-making.

In 2012, New York implemented a quality rating and improvement system called QUALITYstarsNY. One hundred UPK districts are participating in this program. Monitoring tools are largely determined locally in the state, and as previously noted many programs choose to use CLASS and ECERS annually.

**Professional development.** Monitoring information collected by the state informs teacher professional development. State laws require 100 hours of professional development over a five-year period. It is the responsibility of the school district to assure UPK staff receive the amount and targeted type of professional development that supports their ability to provide a high quality instructional program meeting the needs of enrolled children. Agencies will either close UPK classes on district conference days or provide substitutes in order to ensure teachers are getting professional development.

In NYC in 2014, the state hired 30 new coaches, bringing the city's total to 70, which translates to one counselor supervising 45 pre-K teachers, many of them are new to their jobs or working in brand-new programs.

**Integrated system.** Participating school districts are required to assess students on an ongoing basis to inform instruction and track program effectiveness. However, identification of the assessment tool is left to the discretion of district-level governance. The state is planning to link preschool to K-12 level data.

The QUALITYstarsNY standards were designed using information from a number of sources used in NY early childhood programs including: New York State regulations for child care and prekindergarten, New York City regulations, Head Start Program Performance Standards, the former Programs of Excellence, assessment tools such as the Program Administration Scale (PAS) and the Environment Rating Scales (ERS), and the accreditation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core

Universal Prekindergarten Program Implementation Guidance



## North Carolina

### NC Pre-K Kindergarten Program

Since 2001, North Carolina has provided state-funded pre-kindergarten education, originally via the More at Four PreKindergarten Program, now through the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program. The NC Pre-K Program delivers a high-quality educational experience during the year prior to kindergarten entry, enrolling at-risk 4-year-olds from low-income families who have not participated in other early childhood programs. At-risk children are identified based on a number of factors, which include having a developmental delay or identified disability, coming from a family with an income at or below 75 percent of the state median income, having a chronic health condition, or limited English proficiency. Similarly, children whose parents are active duty military personnel are automatically eligible for the program.

Funding for the state pre-K program comes from two primary sources—state appropriations and North Carolina Education Lottery receipts—and federal funds. There is a required contribution from local sources, but the amount is not specified. During the 2011-2012 school year, administrative control of the program was relocated from the Department of Public Instruction to the Department of Health and Human Services, and the program was renamed NC Pre-K. It is required to meet the same high-quality program standards that were in place for the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program.

NC Pre-K classrooms are available statewide in private licensed Head Start programs, child care centers, and public schools. All programs must earn high quality ratings under the state child care licensing system to qualify for participation in pre-K and the state's subsidy system. Program standards set for NC Pre-K must be met in both public and nonpublic settings.

In 2012, the state was awarded a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC).

North Carolina's program earned 10 out of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2014-2015 school year.

In K-12 education, North Carolina spent \$8,390 per pupil in 2012-2013, about the same amount as Tennessee. Students in North Carolina generally scored higher than those in South Carolina and Tennessee on NAEP, but lower than those in Virginia. The best NAEP scores in the state were earned by fourth graders in math, with 45 percent scoring at or above proficient. In 2013, virtually all high school graduates in North Carolina took the ACT, earning an average composite score of 18.7, lowest in the nation. North Carolina schools reported a graduation rate of 82.5 percent during the 2012-2013 school year, second lowest among its neighboring states.

In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions, North Carolina ranked 24th overall for union power and influence, or "average." The state requires districts to offer a full-day kindergarten program. The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 78 percent of age-eligible children in North Carolina were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). North Carolina’s program has **seven** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **eight** elements. In North Carolina, recent changes in program administration and funding undermined confidence in elements that would have been considered fully met in the past. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** North Carolina’s Governor McCrory (R) asked for, and the legislature delivered on, a \$5M expansion, which is now permanent. Funding for pre-K was only one-time funding last year, but was permanently added this year. This was clearly a bipartisan effort, recognizing quality. Pre-K seems to resonate; in North Carolina it is an issue that is narrowly focused, there have been good evaluation results over last 14 years, and it is in every county. However, the legislature is very clear that they only want to serve those who have no opportunity anywhere else at this point. The eligibility goal is to address greatest need at the moment: those who have not had an early learning experience, who are not enrolled in any classrooms, or cannot get access another way; therefore targeting approximately 21 percent of all 4-year-olds.

Approximately \$18.8 M in one-time funds that were available in 2011-2012 were not available in 2012-2013. However, in 2013-2014, \$12.4M in recurring funds were added to the program, making it possible to serve more children than originally anticipated for the year. In 2014-2015, \$123.5 million in state spending were used to support NC Pre-K, which was a reduction of more than \$16 million, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest decrease across all state pre-K programs.

There is an Early Childhood Caucus of 4 legislators, which is bipartisan. There is also an Early Childhood Advisory Council, which has demonstrated an interest in supporting pre-K as well as a business group working with the Governor’s office providing information, plus Smart Start, and the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Office of Early Learning (OEL) housed within the Department of Public Instruction is a new office that focuses on Pre-K–Grade 3 (John Pruette, Director). OEL partners with the FirstSchool initiative of the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. FirstSchool is a Pre-K–Grade 3 initiative to promote public school efforts to become more responsive to the needs of an increasingly younger, more diverse population. FirstSchool unites the best of early childhood, elementary and special education. OEL does not directly oversee NC Pre-K.

The NC Pre-K Program is administered by the NC Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), [Early Education Unit](#). When the pre-K program was transferred to HHS in 2011, it lost about \$32M in the budget, and lots of staff. There is enough staff for direct services, but the agency must cover administrative issues such as contracts, management of staff, and professional development. The transition has also weakened the state's P-3 alignment.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** North Carolina requires a BA for preschool lead teachers, with specialization. There used to be a parity statement and requirement until early education was moved from public education into health and human services. Currently, there is not a mandate that teachers in the private sector be paid at public school salary level. The state strongly encourages and suggests parity, providing guidance and salary tables. There are references to public schools scales and other scales developed in the state.

**Adult-child ratios.** North Carolina has a maximum class size of 18 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:9. These numbers meet the Essential Element limit of 22 children per class and are within the adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** The program runs 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, for the academic year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** North Carolina's pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 18 children per classroom with a ratio of 1 adult for every 10 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#) were adopted in 2013, and cover all essential domains. Common Core was fully implemented during 2012-2013. However, in July of 2014 Gov. Pat McCrory (R) signed a bill into law that required Common Core curriculum standards be re-written. Common Core remains in place until the re-written standards are completed.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** There are a number of approved pre-K curricula, listed on the North Carolina [website](#). When the program was transferred to HHS, the North Carolina Child Care Commission inherited responsibility for approving curricula by law. Prior to that, an independent group of professionals and researchers worked on curriculum approval. The law requires a 'comprehensive and literacy-based' curriculum, but 'comprehensive' is not defined. A new process was put in place, aligned directly with the language in the law. On the policy side, which can provide guidance, language has been added to encourage using only curricula that align fully with the early learning standards. Close to 95 percent of programs use Creative Curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** North Carolina has a long history of supporting children with special needs in pre-K, both the More at 4 and NC Pre-K programs were partly developed to identify children who may be at risk. In 2013-2014, 4.4 percent of children enrolled in pre-K received special education services. The Office of Early Learning administers state and federally funded programs for young children including NC Pre-K and IDEA Part B services.

The North Carolina Preschool Inclusion Initiative is a cross-agency collaborative planning process that helps communities increase inclusive opportunities for young children (ages 3-5) with special needs. Programs commit to a multi-year process to achieve program wide implementation and are provided specialized instruction to support embedded intervention.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** In North Carolina nearly 6,300 DLL students attend Pre-K. Several policies are in place to support their education such as providing information to families in their home language. DCDEE developed a plan to better serve pre-K ELLs and their families, yet no additional resources have been allocated to this effort. Although professional development is offered to teachers working with ELL students, local programs determine minimum ELL qualifications for its teachers.

According to the US Census, 10.9 percent of people age 5 years and older in North Carolina speak a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** In the most recent NC Pre-K evaluation, a sample of 374 NC Pre-K classrooms were observed in 2013-2014 using the ECERS-R and the average total scores was 5.7 (on a 7.0 scale). Almost all (97 percent) of the sample classrooms scored in the high quality range (5.0 and above), with the remainder (3 percent) scoring in the medium quality range (3.0–4.9), and none scoring in the low quality range (1.0–2.9.) On the ECERS-R Interaction Subscale, the average score was 6.4 (on a 7.0 scale). The researchers noted that “almost all classrooms scoring at or above the required score of 5.0 based on the program guidelines. In addition, teachers who had a B-K license had classrooms with higher ECERS-R scores compared to teachers without a B-K license.” The ECERS tools have been used in North Carolina for many years, and these findings are consistent with evaluations that have been occurring since 2002.

**Child assessments.** Classroom staff is required to conduct ongoing (regular) formative assessments to gather information about each child’s growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction. All formative assessments used by the NC Pre-K Program must be approved by the NC Child Care Commission, based on the assessment tool’s ability to collect information on children’s behaviors, development, skills, knowledge, strengths, needs, and interests across all domains of development. Assessment tools are aligned with the NC Foundation for Early Learning and Development to meet this requirement.

Most programs report using TS GOLD, but other tools include: HighScope Preschool COR, Galileo On-line Assessment System, Learning Accomplishment Profile), Learning Care System, and WSS.

RTT-ELC has provided funding to develop a Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

**Data-driven decision-making.** Elements for data-driven decision-making are in place, including NC Pre-K programs’ required participation in a quality rating system through a rated child care license. In the 2013-2014 school year, 66.8 percent of the 1,165 NC Pre-K Sites were at the highest level, 5-Stars. Less than 10 percent of the programs were in the beginning stages of receiving a rated child care license.

**Professional development.** The NC Educator Evaluation System under NC State Board Policy requires licensed teachers to be formally mentored/coached and evaluated using formative and summative evaluation procedures annually, based on type and level of BK licensure held.

NC BK Licensed teachers receive formal, needs-based mentoring/coaching support linked to child assessment and teacher evaluations to improve instructional practices for children served. Teachers working toward the NC BK SII licensure requirements participate in a minimum of six documented semester hours per year, prescribe by a Plan of Study, a professional development plan, and the 3-year Beginning Teacher Support Program

(mentoring/performance evaluation). Teacher assistants working toward education requirements participate in a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

North Carolina requires 75 clock hours of professional development per 5-year BK SII Licensure cycle. North Carolina regulations do require planning time outside of the instructional day, within the 40-hour week or 8-hour day. It is in policy and also in rule that teachers be given time away from what might be considered 'custodial duties' to create time to meet with families, make home visits, and participate in learning communities.

**Integrated system.** Because NC Pre-K is no longer housed in the Department of Public Instruction, opportunities to align pre-K with K-12 more intentionally have slowed. There is some opportunity to continue to build on that system, with OEL. NC Pre-K classrooms in public schools have slightly more alignment and intentionality to connect to K-3 than within programs operated in nonpublic settings.

The North Carolina Star Rated License Project (QRIS), established in 1999, has allowed the system to integrate some of the system's components, most notably teacher qualifications and licensing.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

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## Ohio

### Ohio Early Childhood Education

The Ohio Public Preschool Program (PSP) was officially established in 1990, after four years as a pilot program. In 2013-2014, the eligible providers for this program expanded from school districts to include highly rated child care providers and chartered nonpublic schools. This report only focuses on the Early Childhood Education Grants (ECE), Ohio's state funded preschool program.

In 2014-2015, ECE enrollment increased by 1,650 children, or 1 percent to serve nearly 10,000 three- and four-year-olds. This was the second consecutive year to see enrollment grow, practically doubling what had been flat enrollment (5,700) for multiple years. Still, Ohio remains near the bottom in 4-year-old access, continuing to reach fewer than 5 percent of 4-year-olds and 2 percent of 3-year-olds in the state.

Ohio was awarded almost \$70 million for its Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTT-ELC). The state pre-K program, preschool special education, and publicly funded child care programs all participate in the QRIS.

Ohio's Early Childhood Education program earned 4 out of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in 2014-2015. The state does not require teachers to have a Bachelor's degree, although it does require specialized training, and does not require assistant teachers to have a CDA or equivalent. The teacher in-service requirement is only 15 hours per year. Maximum class size for 3-year-olds is 24 and for 4-year-olds it is 28, ratios are 1:12 and 1:14 respectively. The serving of meals is locally determined based on the length of the program day.

In K-12 education, Ohio spent \$11,197 per pupil in 2013, which ranked it 19th highest in the nation. Compared to three neighboring states (Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania), Ohio had the second highest share of eighth graders who scored at or above proficient in reading. Ohio students' average NAEP scores in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades in both reading and math were higher than national averages. Ohio's teachers union ranked 12<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "strong," in a 2012 Fordham University [study](#).

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 75 percent of age-eligible children in Ohio were enrolled in public and private Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 72 percent attended full-day programs. The state requires districts to offer a full-day kindergarten program.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Ohio Early Childhood Education program has **four** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets criteria for **six** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.



Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	–	–	–	–	●	●	○	○	○	ND	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** There is broad support for preschool in Ohio, but funding and enrollment remain quite limited for a state of Ohio’s size. In 2012, Governor John Kasich (R) said in his [2015 State of the State Address](#) that the state is aiming for funding 17,000 preschool slots for kids who “will be better prepared for school.” In 2014-2015, the state added \$11.2 million on top of the \$10 million added in 2013-2014, for a total of \$21.2 million in the 2014-2015 state biennium. This increases the number of ECE funded children from 8,150 in 2013-2014 to a total of 11,090 funded children in 2014-2015. Despite the increase, this leaves enrollment of 4-year-olds at roughly five percent of the population.

Ohio’s General Assembly increased the state’s investment in early learning preschool services when the governor signed into law [HB 64 \(2015\)](#), which allocated an additional \$15 million to the early childhood education program for Fiscal Year 2016 and \$10 million more for Fiscal Year 2017.

The RTT-ELC application development was led by the Governor’s office and prepared through a partnership of the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and Ohio Business Roundtable (BRT). The BRT has been a leader on early childhood policy. It supported the creation of the early childhood position in the Governor’s office, the development of the new kindergarten readiness assessment, and the RTT-ELC grant application.

A number of foundations have also supported pre-K efforts including Cleveland [PRE4CLE](#), [Success by 6](#) in Cincinnati, [The Raymond John Wean Foundation](#), and [Fight Crime: Invest in Kids](#).

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Pre-K is administered through the Office of Early Learning housed within ODE; child care and the state’s QRIS is in the Department of Job and Family Services. However, the teams work together daily, and meet weekly about progressing towards alignment.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and Compensation.** Ohio does not require lead teachers to have a BA although they do require specialization. In the QRIS, programs earn more points for meeting a higher education requirement. In 2013-2014, 11 percent of teachers had an associate degree, 42 percent had a Bachelor’s degree, and 47 percent had a master’s degree. There is nothing in policy about salary parity.

**Adult-child ratios.** Ohio has a maximum class size of 24 for 3-year-olds, 28 for 4-year-olds. Ratios are 1:12 and 1:14 respectively.

**Learning time.** Program time is a minimum of 12.5 hours per week, therefore not meeting the Essential Elements requirement of a “full-day.”

**Two adults in the classroom.** Ohio requires two adults for nearly all classrooms.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Ohio’s RTT-ELC work plan expanded child and program standards. Ohio’s Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), revised in 2012, now incorporate additional areas of school readiness, including physical well-being/motor development, approaches toward learning, and social and emotional development. The ELDS support children from birth to kindergarten entry and are aligned with the Ohio Learning Standards (K–12 Standards), including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The [Birth Through Pre-K Learning, Development Standards and Implementation Guides](#) provides implementation support for the ELDS.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Curriculum is a local control decision, there is not a list to choose from in Ohio, and the state does not endorse any curricula. They do require that a curriculum be research-based and aligned to the ELDS. Review of the curricula in use is part of monitoring and technical assistance. Specialists discuss alignment, and can provide onsite technical assistance on how to implement and use a curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** There is a state policy of including children with special needs in preschool in the Least Restrictive Environment. The state is providing technical assistance to ensure that it is implemented correctly.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** At ODE there is an office for English Language Learners (ELLs), largely focused on K-12 systems. The office has just finished developing a set of 10 recommendations to the Superintendent around supporting the state’s youngest learners. The Head Start State Collaboration office and a group of professionals have been part of a work group making the recommendations.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** The ECE program has been evaluated for process quality using the ELLCO tool, with various stages completed in 2009, 2011, and 2012. In the 2013-2014 school year, programs began participating in Ohio’s QRIS. However, no recent data from the ELLCO or other observation instruments used by Ohio could be reviewed. [Data](#) from the previous 3-level QRIS system indicated that the average program (not just state-funded preschool) scored 4.85 on the ECERS in 2005-2007.

**Child assessments.** Ohio used RTT-ELC funding to develop and implement comprehensive and developmentally appropriate assessments of children at kindergarten entry, beyond a focus on literacy to include additional areas of school readiness. Ohio collaborated with Maryland to develop a new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, as well as a pre-K through kindergarten formative assessment, covering from 36 to 72 months of age. The assessments were piloted and field-tested during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, prior to statewide implementation.

Pre-K classrooms are required to participate in the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) for preschool-aged children, a formative assessment system (ages 3 to 6). PD is provided and required.

**Data-driven decision-making.** All Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Preschool Special Education (PSE) programs funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) are mandated to participate in Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) (Ohio's QRIS) and are required to achieve a rating of 3, 4, or 5 to maintain state funding.

ODE is required to submit an annual report (Section 263.20 of House Bill 59 (C)) to the Governor, and the Legislature on its website detailing the early childhood education programs operated by ODE and the ELDS.

The ECE program has been evaluated for process quality using the ELLCO tool, with various stages completed in 2009, 2011, and 2012. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, preschool programs began participating in Ohio's tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. At star levels 3, 4, and 5, programs must have PD plans, for each teachers and classroom. Although level 3 is considered one of the top tiers, its requirements with respect to practice appear to represent a minimal level of teaching quality for an educational program. In 2014, 171 ECE programs licensed by the Department of Education and Department of Job and Family Services received ratings in Step Up To Quality. Of those, 27 programs (16 percent) received a 3-star rating, 58 programs (34 percent) received a 4-star rating, and 86 programs (50 percent) received a 5-star rating. Most state-funded preschool programs have not been rated and information on those that have been rated was not reported separately.

An evaluation is currently being conducted of QRIS.

**Professional development.** The Ohio professional development requirement is for 20 clock hours per two-year period. As noted above, the QRIS requires some professional development plans from programs and teachers must attend training of the child formative assessment process, ELA.

**Integrated system.** Because of the Early Learning Challenge grant, Ohio has spent the last four years working on integrating system alignment. Before the ELC, the state had infant-toddler and preschool standards, but nothing comprehensive from birth to age 8, but they have achieved that now. B-K standards span the 5 essential domains—and there has been significant PD around them, including modules broken down by domain and by age. Ohio also took three of the areas (approaches to learning, social emotional, and physical) from K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and made them available to teachers as a resource. Both child formative assessments: ELA and KEA are based on the same standards.

Ohio's revised 5-tier quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which was implemented in fall of 2013, applies a single set of program standards to all types of early childhood programs. In addition, QRIS requires that assessments must be aligned to the ELDS.

## **Key Contacts**

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[State DOE website](#)

[2014 Annual report](#)

[Ohio QRIS research](#)

[Ohio RTT-ELC 2014 Performance Report](#)



## Oklahoma

### Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program

Oklahoma's program began in 1980 with the intention of becoming a universal program, serving all 4-year-olds in the state. In 1998, Oklahoma achieved this goal, becoming the second state in the nation to provide free admission to preschool programs for all 4-year-olds. The program is currently available to 99 percent of school districts, and registration continues to increase every year. Currently, the program serves 76 percent of 4-year-olds. The program is largely known for its high quality, program impact, and child outcomes, as reported in a series of studies in Tulsa conducted by Georgetown University and a statewide study by NIEER.

The state's school finance formula provides funding to public school districts. Funding is based on a per-pupil rate, calculated using the age of the child and the length of the program days. Districts are permitted to support other centers by placing public school teachers in child care centers, Head Start settings, and community-based programs, which offer the same services as the public schools and are considered public school enrollees. Subsidy for the state preschool program is amended proportionally with all other public school grade levels. State budget cuts across the board in education have affected early childhood programs, with total state funding and per child spending largely remaining stagnant the past three years. From 2013-2014 to 2014-2015, funding decreased by \$3.4 million (inflation-adjusted).

Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old program earned 8 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2014-2015 school year. The state does not require a CDA for assistant teachers, though they do require a high school or GED diploma. Teachers are not required to participate in professional development, and this has not been required since the 2010-2011 school year.

In K-12 education, Oklahoma scored below the national average in both math and reading in grades 4 and 8 on the *NAEP National Report Card*. Oklahoma ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in per-child spending, spending \$7,672 in 2013. The graduation rate in the state is high, on par with neighboring states and above the national average at 84.8 percent. Oklahoma's teacher's union ranked 43rd overall for union power and influence in a 2012 Fordham University [study](#). Oklahoma requires districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old program meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **five** other elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	●	●	–	●	●	–	●	●	ND	○	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Despite having one of the most notable universal preschool programs in the country, political will in the state is largely quiet. Governor Mary Fallin (R) has publicly supported improving third-grade literacy in the state and the efforts show, with Oklahoma earning the third-largest gain nationally in fourth grade reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exam. The legislature recently passed, in 2015, S285, ensuring that the learning standards for early childhood are aligned with any new subject matter standards adopted. However, state funding for preschool education is more than a \$1,000 per pupil below its level in 2010 and has been stagnant or declining for the past five years. This is part of a more general problem faced by the state attributed to both recent tax cuts/breaks and the energy market downturn. For FY 2017 the state faces a \$1.7 billion funding gap for the budget overall.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Currently, the Director of Early Childhood and Family Education has recently left her position and this position has not been refilled. Moreover, this department has just one person. However, the state has a tradition of strong leadership at the Department of Education (DOE) and there are strong leaders in other institutions within the state. Diane Horm leads the Early Childhood Education Institute at the University of Oklahoma, Tulsa. Leaders in the early childhood community (such as Steven Dow) are joined by leaders in business and philanthropy (including the [George Kaiser Family Foundation](#)) in promoting a vision of strong early childhood programs throughout the state.

The [Oklahoma Champions for Early Opportunities \(OKCEO\)](#) is a statewide network of businesses and community leaders dedicated to advocating to businesses, legislative, and community leaders on the link between early childhood development and economic growth. Most recently, the group has convened a business summit to focus on early childhood development in several cities throughout the state where business leaders and state agency heads discussed Oklahoma's workforce challenges. Early childhood is fully supported by the local business community and take on the role of educating the lawmakers on the importance of early learning.

The [Alliance for Early Success](#) is working in Oklahoma to identify a mechanism to include family voices in policy and program changes, implement a standardized prekindergarten literacy assessment, and recommend policy changes to child care subsidy regulations to increase access and promote program collaboration. The Alliance works with [Smart Start Oklahoma](#), a nonprofit early childhood initiative that serves on the states early childhood advisory council on these initiatives.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Oklahoma requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. Teachers are paid on par with other public school teachers. Assistant teachers are required to hold a high school diploma or equivalent. If the assistant teacher is employed by a Title I school, requirements include at least an associate's degree or higher, having completed at least two years or 48 credit hours of study at

an institution of higher education, or having passed the Oklahoma General Education Test, ParaPro Assessment Test, or the WorkKeys Assessment.

**Adult-child ratios.** Oklahoma has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. These numbers meet the Essential Element limit of 22 children per class and are within the adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** The Oklahoma Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program operates 5 days per week during the school year. Programs have the option of operating a part-day or school-day program or a combination of both within each district, therefore services can be provided between 2.5 to 6 hours per day depending on program choice.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and an assistant are present at all times during the 2.5 to 6 hour education program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The comprehensive and appropriate Oklahoma PASS Standards for Pre-Kindergarten (PASS) were adopted in 2003 and were last revised in 2011.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state's requirement regarding curriculum is fairly general, and the state does not provide strong guidance on adopting and implementing curriculum. No approved list of curricula is provided. Under the Standards for Accreditation of Oklahoma Schools, curricula must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the students. The PASS are aligned with the Creative Curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** In the 2013-2014 school year, Oklahoma served 2,721 four-year-olds with special education services. The DOE provides services for children with special needs, depending on developmental functioning. Evaluation teams must use standardized/norm-referenced assessments to document levels of developmental functioning and present levels of performance. Information from instruments, along with existing data and functional assessments, may be used for documentation. The program is required to place children with special needs in the least restrictive environment.

For children younger than 4, Oklahoma's SoonerStart program serves as an early intervention program to meet the needs of families with infants and toddlers with developmental delays. The program builds upon and provides support and resources to assist family members to enhance the child's learning and development through learning opportunities.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** According to the United States Census, 9.4 percent of persons age 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home. Oklahoma includes data on home language of children in the state's pre-K database. The state allocates extra funds to provide additional resources for children considered to be Dual Language Learners (DLLs), including providing professional development to teachers regarding best practices. These supports include two DLL program specialists on staff at the DOE who provide professional development to districts with DLL populations by request.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** According to a study by Georgetown University, the Tulsa public schools preschool program had reasonably high quality as assessed by the CLASS and other indicators in 2006. However, there is a lack of recent statewide data that could be used to draw conclusions about high-quality teaching.



**Child assessments.** Oklahoma does not specify assessment expectations for state-funded prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, but does provide some resources for educators and parents. Child level assessments and their uses are determined locally. Common applications of child assessments are to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, track child and program level outcomes over time, and provide a measure of kindergarten readiness. It is state policy for assessments not to be used for high-stakes testing.

Oklahoma offers the [Kindergarten Developmental Checklist](#), aligned to the PASS, to assist and guide teachers in observing and documenting what children should be able to do in kindergarten. The state also provides the [Developmental Learning Skills–4 Year Old](#), a list of skills that each pre-kindergarten student ought to master or obtain by the end of the school year.

The [Early Literacy Quick Assessment \(ELQA\)](#), a web-based formative assessment offered by the University of Oklahoma, is a tool that can be administered to both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students to meet the Reading Sufficiency Act requirements. Students are assessed at the beginning of the school year and at different intervals throughout the school year to provide teachers with data to inform instruction.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Data from monitoring is used to identify programs for corrective actions or sanctions and to make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program.

A 2005 study from the National Institute for Early Education Research, [The Effects of Oklahoma’s Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program on Young Children’s School Readiness](#), found that Oklahoma’s Early Education program produced significant, meaningful improvements in participating children’s early language, literacy, and math skills at entry into kindergarten. However, an evaluation of the program by [Georgetown University](#), found no statistically significant effects on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test scores in reading or math. The study found a marginally significant positive effects for certain subgroup, such as math gains for children who qualify for free lunch and full-price lunch (middle class) and preschool participation on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math scores for black males.

**Professional development.** Professional development requirements were removed in the 2010-2011 school year. Per Oklahoma HB 2928, “A licensed or certified teacher shall not be required to complete any points of the total number of professional development points required.” It is a local school district’s decision how many hours of professional development are required.

**Integrated system.** Standards, curriculum, program assessment, and instruction are integral components of Oklahoma’s integrated system for continuous improvement on the state, local, and program level. The state is in the process of planning K-12 and ECE integration. Oklahoma is currently revising P-12 standards for ELA/Math.

Lack of child assessment data, professional development and integration into the state longitudinal data system limits Oklahoma’s ability to have a comprehensive, fully integrated system.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

### Oklahoma PASS Priority Academic Student Skills

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## Oregon

### Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten Program (OPK)

Established in 1987, the Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OPK) program provides comprehensive child and family development services for 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families. In 1992, a state-federal partnership was formalized between the Region X Office of Head Start and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to support a collaborative Head Start and state prekindergarten system, which later expanded to serve additional Head Start-eligible children.

OPK programs operate using federal and state funds enabling an additional 6,066 children to receive preschool services in 2014. General fund dollars are allocated on a biennial basis by the state legislature. Enrollment and funding have been more or less stable in recent years. New legislation, [HB 3380](#), created a blueprint for high-quality preschool in the state along with a new \$27 million investment which increased enrollment and quality expectations. The changes will be implemented by OPK in 2016, therefore the Essential Elements ratings in the table below are based on the new program requirements.

State pre-K children must meet the federal Head Start income guidelines. After priority is given to families whose income is at 100 percent of the FPL or below, then up to 35 percent of children can be enrolled whose family income is between 100 percent and 130 percent of the FPL. If a grantee has both state pre-K and federal Head Start funds, 90 percent of enrollees must meet the family income requirements. If grantee has only state pre-K funding, 80 percent must meet the income requirement. Children in foster care or who are homeless are categorically eligible. A minimum of 10 percent of total enrollment must be children with disabilities. Locally determined risk factors determine priority for services which are prioritized by local boards and policy councils.

To increase enrollment, all federal Head Start grantees initially were awarded state prekindergarten funds through a competitive statewide grant process; in 2013-2014, funds were awarded on a continuation basis. Non-sectarian private and public organizations not receiving federal Head Start funding have also been awarded competitive state prekindergarten funds. In 2013-2014, approximately 10 percent of OPK children were served in public schools and 90 percent of children in other Head Start settings.

Assistant teacher qualifications requiring a minimum of a CDA took effect in the 2013-2014 school year. As a result, Oregon met benchmark criteria for nine NIEER quality standards in 2014, up from eight the preceding year, still missing the lead teacher degree requirement. In 2012, Oregon was one of five states funded in the second round of federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants.

In K-12 education, Oregon ranks slightly below the US average for education spending, at \$9,543 per pupil in 2013, less per pupil on public education than neighboring Washington, but more than California and Idaho, according to [Ballotpedia](#). Oregon's NAEP scores were just slightly below national averages on math and reading at 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Oregon's graduation rate is 68.7 percent, nearly the lowest in the country. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now [assessed](#) the power and influence of state teacher unions, Oregon is ranked 2nd in the

country, among the very strongest. The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts report, *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 75.7 percent of age-eligible children in Oregon were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013 with 60.6 percent of these attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The new legislation in Oregon means that beginning in 2016, the program can expect to meet **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **six** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	●	●	●	●	●	–	○	○	ND	○	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Kate Brown (D) has been a supporter of early learning initiatives and was vocal in her support of House Bill 3380 (2015) which provided a blueprint to make quality early learning opportunities available to more children from low-income families. The bill provides funding for children from families with incomes at or below 200 percent of the poverty level, and allows a mix of programs to apply for state funding. In the first year of implementation, the program plans to serve over 1400 children in four to six communities. HB 3380 also directed the Early Learning Division within ODE to administer “Preschool Promise,” which includes OPK.

The Children’s Institute (Swati Adarkar, President/CEO) in Oregon has “brought together and empowered a bipartisan coalition [the Ready for School Leader’s Panel] of top business and community leaders and former elected officials from around the state, who have contributed their time and expertise to champion wise investments in early learning.”

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Early Learning Division administers OPK. The work of the Early Learning Division as identified in the Preschool Promise blueprint includes monitoring providers to ensure they meet program standards in addition to administering Preschool Promise contracts with the Early Learning Hubs (Hubs). A Hub is a coordinating body comprised of representatives from health care, early childhood education, human and social services, K-12 school districts, and the private sector in a geographically defined service area. The Hubs work on aligning efforts, resources, and strategies. The Early Learning Division is expected to provide technical assistance to Hubs and preschool providers to ensure continuous quality improvement, as well as collecting, aggregating, and reporting on data from the preschool programs, including OPK.

Megan Irwin became the Early Learning System interim-Director in August 2014 (in July 2015 she was appointed Director). Ms. Irwin previously served as the agency's Director of Policy and Programs and oversaw Oregon's \$30 million RTT-ELC grant. She served as the National Expansion and Program Director for Stand for Children, a multi-state education advocacy organization. The office has a staff of two who are devoted to OPK.

The Early Learning Division works closely with its Early Learning Council (ELC) that has the authority to set minimum and target salary requirements for teachers. HB 3380 directs the ELC to identify resources to develop, support and sustain the preschool program, including evaluation, professional development opportunities, technical assistance, monitoring and guidance to ensure pathways and supports to increase culturally and linguistically diverse preschool staff. The ELC also makes the final decision on the selection of Hubs, the applicants and recipients of Preschool Promise funds. Hubs are responsible for developing a community plan and identifying providers within their community that fit within that plan.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Currently, a BA is not required for lead teachers. In nonpublic schools, half of grantee teachers must have at least an AA or higher in ECE or a related credential, with a minimum of 15 credits in ECE. Teachers in nonpublic settings who do not have an AA must have a CDA.

Under the new legislation, preschools will be required to have highly trained lead teachers who have at least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a field related to early childhood education. The legislation allows time for existing teachers to work toward this standard. Preschools also are required to meet a minimum salary bar set by the state that moves toward parity with the state's public kindergarten teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** The new legislation requires one adult in the classroom for every 10 children. Class sizes are limited to 20 children with one lead teacher and one assistant. Currently, the required staff-child ratio is 2:7 for 3-year-olds, and 1:10 for 4-year-olds. Maximum class size is 20 or lower, thus both meet the standard for Essential Elements.

**Learning time.** Programs must offer at least 3.5 hours per day for a minimum of 32 weeks per year, plus required home visits at 1.5 hours each. Most programs operate 3.5 to 4 hours per day, 3 or 4 days per week, plus required home visits for a school year using state funding. The length of the year is locally determined. This does not meet the standard for the Essential Elements as it stands. However, the new Oregon law requires that preschools provide, at a minimum, the annual number of instruction hours required for the state's full-day kindergarten program, so it will meet the standard.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As previously described, the new legislation requires two adults for a maximum class size of 20 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** In 2012, Oregon adopted the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework (now the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework), which is currently being aligned with Common Core State Standards for K-12.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Under the new regulations, any preschool receiving state funding will be required to have a top rating—four- or five-star—on [Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System](#). The QRIS requires that programs use a research-based curriculum that supports children's learning and development, however how this will be evaluated is not clear.

**Support for students with special needs.** Inclusive classrooms are encouraged and approximately 18 percent of enrolled students qualify for and are receiving special education services in regular classrooms. Federal Head Start Performance Standards must be followed and all programs must meet monitoring requirements. No special education license or endorsement is required for OPK staff.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Programs are required to develop procedures for identifying children who are English Language Learners (ELLs), ensure that children make progress towards acquiring English through culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional services, and inform parents of such children about instructional services used. If 50 percent or more of children speak a language other than English, programs must ensure that non-English speaking children are provided language support as needed. Non-English classes are permitted; translators can be available, and there is professional development support for bilingual teaching. OPK programs follow Federal Head Start Performance Standards, which include the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. According to the [US Census Bureau](#), 14.8 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** High quality teacher-child interactions are encouraged and CLASS is in use in the program. However, CLASS data are not available for review.

**Child assessments.** As of July 2012, the ODE requires all OPK programs to use TS GOLD as their developmental assessment tool. It is recommended that staff receive training before using TS GOLD and free resources available on TS GOLD's website are recommended.

In 2013, Oregon joined North Carolina and a KEA development consortium of seven other states (Arizona, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, and Rhode Island) and one collaborating state (South Carolina).

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** No formal assessment has been conducted of the Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten program to date. Program quality is monitored by the Early Learning Division of ODE through ongoing communication with grantees and the Regional Office of Head Start.

Triennial evaluations are conducted on-site for every Head Start grantee, either through the Oregon Department of Education and/or the Office of Head Start, though additional site visits are conducted as needed. The state reports the following: structured observations of classroom quality (CLASS), documentation of children's learning and/or child outcomes (TS GOLD), documentation of program-level outcomes (compliance with Federal Head Start Performance Standards, formally every three years or as needed, Program Information Reports annually), review of program facilities and safety procedures (through triennial monitoring reports and annual self assessments), results of program self-assessments (annual self assessment reports), participation in a state quality rating system, and a review of program records (annual self-assessment; site visits as needed). Results are used to inform child, program, and state development.

Over the past two years, Oregon has been implementing its QRIS, as previously mentioned. The system is based on a set of standards focusing on health and safety of children, the learning environment, personnel qualifications, parent engagement and the program's business acumen. In order to receive state funding through HB 3380, programs must have achieved a 4- or 5- star-rating in the QRIS.

**Professional development.** Oregon meets the NIEER benchmark for 15 hours per year. New legislation and requirements within the QRIS will focus on professional development. Direct coaching is not provided to grantees, but they do receive T/TA from the state. The OPK programs do provide coaching to varying degrees within their own agencies, but the state does not collect that information.

**Integrated system.** Regardless of funding source, all children enrolled in the OPK programs receive unique identifier numbers so that children’s developmental progress can be followed as they enter the K-12 system. One of the functions of the Early Learning Hubs is to coordinate early learning services. The focus appears to be on aligning service delivery and resources, not on alignment of standards.

New legislation, as noted, will require “that programs use a research-based curriculum, offer professional development, and conduct child assessments to inform instruction and program planning.” Participation in the QRIS will assist in this alignment.

## **Key Contacts**

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

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## Pennsylvania

### PA Pre-K Counts, K4, Education Accountability Block Grant, and Head Start Supplement

Before 2004, Pennsylvania did not have a state-funded prekindergarten program defined as such under state law. However, districts could deliver preschool through Pennsylvania's Kindergarten for Four-Year-Olds (K4) program or offer preschool to 4-year-olds through the School Based Pre-K (SBPK). The K4 program is run following Pennsylvania's kindergarten guidelines, while districts using SBPK follow the state's preschool regulations. The state's basic instructional subsidy formula partially funds children served in the K4 program. Since the 2004-2005 school year, districts have been able to provide prekindergarten through the Education Accountability Block Grant (EABG). Services under EABG are available for children for the two years prior to the locally determined kindergarten entry age, but districts may set additional eligibility criteria such as being from a low-income family or lack of kindergarten readiness.

Established in the 2004-2005 school year with an original investment of \$15 million, the Pennsylvania Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) provides extended-day services for federally funded Head Start children and provides additional Head Start openings. This state-funded program is only accessible to federal Head Start grantees and their child-care partners who obtain a minimum STAR 3 level in the Keystone STARS quality initiative program. A fourth state-funded program was created in the 2007-2008 school year. The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PKC) program enrolls children up to two years before their locally determined kindergarten eligibility age, though programs may set additional standards based on local need. The state sets income eligibility at or below 300 percent FPL, though grantees may set a lower income threshold. Head Start programs, school districts, private preschools, and child care centers designated at Keystone STAR 3 or 4 rating are eligible for competitive funds. The 2014 enacted budget provided an additional \$10 million in funding for PKC for the 2014-2015 school year. In 2013 Pennsylvania was awarded a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant.

PKC reaches 4 percent of the state's 4-year-olds and 1 percent of 3-year-olds; 12,131 children in all. Services are delivered between 2.5 to 5 hours per day over 180 days per year. In 2014-2015, PKC met 7 NIEER benchmarks for quality, missing the benchmarks on CDA, meals, and screening and referrals. For 2015-2016 PKC has changed their requirements to fulfill the meals and screening and referral requirements. Overall, Pennsylvania ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in Access for 4-year-olds, 15<sup>th</sup> for 3-year-olds, and 10<sup>th</sup> in state spending.

EABG serves 1 percent of the state's 4-year-olds; HSSAP and K4 each serve 1 percent of 3-year-olds and 2 percent of 4-year-olds; HSSAP serves 7 percent of 3-year-olds and 10 percent of 4-year-olds. EABG meets 5 NIEER benchmarks, missing the teacher BA, assistant teacher degree, screening and referral, meals, and monitoring benchmarks. HSSAP meets 9 NIEER benchmarks, missing only on the teacher BA requirement. SBPK/K4 met only 3 benchmarks, missing specialized training, assistant teacher degree, ratio, class size, screening and referrals, meals, and monitoring.

In K-12 education, Pennsylvania ranks above the US average for education spending, at \$13,864 per pupil in 2013. Pennsylvania scores slightly above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and has an 85.5 percent graduation rate, higher than neighboring states Maryland, New York, and Ohio, with a dropout rate lower than the national average of 2.2 percent 2010-2011. Pennsylvania reported total public education expenditures

lower than New York, but higher than Maryland and Ohio, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Pennsylvania is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 74.4 percent of age-eligible children in Pennsylvania were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 66.8 percent were attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Political will, strong leaders, and integrated system ratings were chosen based on overall strength of support for early education in the state, rather than support for specific programs. Pennsylvania’s EABG meets **four** of the essential Elements, and partially meets **two**; HSSAP meets **four** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **seven** elements. SBPK/K4 met **two** of the Essential Elements and partially meet **four** elements. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **five** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

### EABG

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	–	–	–	ND	–	–	–	○

### HSSAP

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	○	○	–	ND	○	○	○	○

### SBPK/K4

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	○	–	ND	–	–	○	○

## PA Pre-K Counts

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	●	–	●	–	●	●	○	○	–	ND	○	●	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Support for state pre-K has been relatively strong since Ed Rendell’s session as Governor, and looks to continue under Governor Tom Wolf (D), who has expressed support and proposed an increase of \$120M in funding for preschool. There is strong business community and foundation support for early childhood programs in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children brings together supporters including the PA Build Initiative, Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality, The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and the William Penn Foundation, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

Along with the state program, there is support for developing a universal pre-K program in Philadelphia, after voters, in May, approved a 17-member Commission for Universal Pre-Kindergarten. However, the Governor and the Legislature faced a budget impasse in 2016 that was largely unresolved and there is no sign of a resolution for the 2017 budget. This presents a serious problem for making any advances that require funding, and the program has yet to recover from its post recession decline.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** State agency capacity to manage an expanding program and communicate the value of high quality preschool to stakeholders is strong, with OCDEL serving as a liaison between the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), focusing on early childhood programs.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** EABG and HSSAP do not require a BA for teachers, however SBPK/K4 do require a BA. In PKC, lead teachers are required to hold a BA and ECE certification. Compensation for teachers is lower than that for elementary school teachers in the same district, although higher than for Head Start teachers in at least one district (\$32K for Pre-K Counts in Lancaster, \$41K for elementary school, \$25K for Head Start).

**Adult-child ratios.** In EABG and HSSAP, ratios are 1:10 with a maximum class size of 20. For K4 there are no limits on class size and ratio, while for SBPK maximum class size is 20, and staff-child ratio is 1:10 for 3- and 4-year-old classrooms. The same is true for PKC, maximum class size is 20, and staff-child ratio is 1:10, and a class size of 17 students is recommended. The recommended staff-child ratio is 2:17; if the 1:10 ratio is used, other qualified staff must be present on site in case of emergency.

**Learning time.** None of the Pennsylvania pre-K programs meet the full day requirement. EABG programs are funded for 2.5 or 5 hours per day, 180 days per year. SBPK/K4 operate a minimum of 2.5 hours per day.

PKC offer half-day programs must provide a minimum of 2.5 hour per day of instructional services or activities, for a minimum of 180 days per year.

HSSAP programs must operate according to federal Head Start Performance Standards, which require a minimum of 3.5 hours per day, 4 days per week. Full day for HSSAP is considered more than 5.5 hours per day. Center-based programs can operate 4 or 5 days per week; home-based programs offer home visits once per week with socialization days. Most programs operate between 128 to 180 days a year with a few offering full-year services of approximately 240 days per year. Collaboration with other agencies and programs is required per program regulation, but implementation is locally determined.

**Two adults in the classroom.** All programs except K4 meet ratio and class size requirements. For PKC, “Classroom size is restricted to no more than 20 students (with 17 students preferred as in the State Board of Education regulations in Chapter 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment) with two adult staff—a teacher certified in early childhood education, and a teacher aide who is highly qualified. If the classroom has 10 or fewer 3- and 4-year-olds, it must have one highly qualified teacher and a secondary person available in the facility. The secondary person must meet the requirements for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teacher's aide.”

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Revised, research-based, [Early Learning Standards](#) that include PA Core Standards were released July 2014. The standards went into effect formally in July 2015, and are used for all early learning programs.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** No curriculum monitoring occurs for EABG or SBPK/K4. For HSSAP and PKC, a copy of an approved curriculum list is available. These curriculum models have been determined to align with the 2014 Revised Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for Prekindergarten. Locally developed curricula that are aligned with the PA Early Learning Standards for Prekindergarten are permitted upon approval from OCDEL.

**Support for students with special needs.** Regulations for PKC recommend that children with special needs should be in classrooms that “reflect the naturally occurring ratio of students with and without developmental delays and disabilities in the area served by the approved provider and should not contain more than 20 percent of students who have been identified by the start of the program year as having a developmental delay or disability.” In addition providers may not deny students admission to a class nor should SPED children miss substantial portions of the PKC day.

The two programs with the highest enrollment are PKC and HSSP, and they are line items within the budget, and so do not tend to fluctuate. The other programs may decrease enrollment following budget and/or political changes. The number of children with special needs served in PKC is not known.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The following supports are available for English Language Learners (ELLs) in PKC: Bilingual non-English classes are permitted in pre-K. Information must be presented to parents in their primary language. State policy does not regulate services for ELLs in the other programs. As part of PA teacher certification maintenance, teachers are required to have 6 credit hours every 5 years of professional development addressing special needs and/or ELLs.

According to the US Census Bureau, 20.7 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** HSSAP and PKC do use structured observations of classroom quality to provide feedback to teachers, along with documenting student outcomes. PKC programs can voluntarily participate in the state's QRIS as well. However, CLASS or ECERS scores are not available for review.

**Child assessments.** EABG does not outline child assessment requirements. SBPK/K4 determine assessments locally. HSSAP and PKC programs choose from approved list of assessment tools aligned to Pennsylvania's Early Learning Outcome Reporting Frameworks.

In the 2014-2015 school year the Commonwealth implemented a new tool, called the Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KEI). This program is only required in selected school districts and programs; use by others is voluntary. The KEI is designed to provide teachers with an instructional strategy for documenting students' proficiency across cognitive and non-cognitive domains at kindergarten entry. The KEI is aligned with the PA Early Learning Standards and the PA Core.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** The following are included in program monitoring for HSSAP and PKC: structured observations of classroom quality (ERS, annual self-assessment, bi-annual external assessment), documentation of children's learning and/or child outcomes (chosen from approved tools aligned with early learning outcomes reporting framework, reporting required twice/year), documentation of program-level outcomes (Program Review Instrument, annually), review of program facilities and safety procedures (ERS); results of program self-assessments (ERS, program review instrument), participation in a state QRIS (optional for HSSAP and PKC), and a review of program records (HSSAP and PKC only). According to program regulations, the ongoing assessment of the goals within the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan will be monitored as a source of evidence for compliance with PKC policies, and ongoing updates of the demographic and child outcomes information in the Early Learning Network are mandated requirements for PKC providers.

The Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory was piloted in 2013 and is required for completion by kindergarten teachers in focus and priority schools in 2014. ECERS-R is used in PKC and Head Start programs can elect to use CLASS instead, there are CLASS-reliable trainers throughout the state.

For the Head Start program, they follow federal requirements, and there is a huge policy emphasis on data-driven decision-making, and on using the early learning standards and approved assessments and curriculum, along with training around training around assessments and curriculum. There is a strong focus within programs on how they are evaluating progress, and how they are using and analyzing data.

There has been no formal evaluation measuring program quality or effectiveness for any PA prekindergarten program, although ECERS-R and CLASS are used regularly in PKC and in the STARS programs.

**Professional development.** For PKC, at a minimum, 24 hours of professional development must be obtained annually with at least 50 percent or 12 hours specific to early childhood education. This ongoing professional Development must be aligned with the Pennsylvania teacher certification requirements of 180 hours every five years of approved content. Professional development hours may include hours facilitated by a Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS)-certified instructor, providing ACT 48 credit or college classes. All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teachers must attend the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Core Series of Professional Regulation Program Guidelines Development. Within the first two years of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts participation, the following sessions are required:

1. Environment Rating Scale

2. Observation and Assessment
3. Linking Standards, Curriculum Framework and Assessment
4. Strengthening Relationships with Children, Families and Colleagues
5. Application of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms

Planning time is provided for in the PKC regulations.

HSSAP follows Head Start guidelines.

**Integrated system.** There is considerable alignment across elements of the system (excepting curriculum) and data from preschool programs are entered into a system linked to the K-12 system by unique identifiers. Feedback on classroom observations is provided to teachers and programs throughout the system.

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality](#)

[Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards](#)

[Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning \(OCDEL\)](#)

[Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Statute, Regulations and Guidelines](#)

<http://www.indeed.com/salary/q-Teachers-Pre-K-Counts-Program-I-Lancaster,-PA.html>

<http://www.indeed.com/salary/q-Pre-K-Count-Teacher-I-Philadelphia,-PA.html>



## Rhode Island

### Rhode Island State Prekindergarten Program

The Rhode Island State Prekindergarten Program was launched in the fall of 2009. The program is open to all children in each participating community who are 4 years old by September 1, though enrollment is determined by a lottery. Public schools, private child care, and Head Start programs are eligible to apply to the competitive Request for Proposal process, conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). Funding for the Rhode Island State Pre-Kindergarten Program is included in the state's school funding formula. The Rhode Island Education Aid Foundation Formula, approved in 2010, takes a phased-in approach to expanding access to high-quality pre-K, starting with communities that have a high proportion of children eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The phased-in approach, investing \$10 million over 10 years, will ensure that pre-K expansion creates high-quality learning programs, improves access for the students who need it the most, and assures a smooth transition between early childhood and K-12 programs.

In 2014-2015 the state prekindergarten program served 306 children, 3 percent of the state's 4-year-olds. There is not an income requirement to enroll. State funding in 2014-2015 was \$2.9 million with per-child spending at \$9,641.

The program meets all 10 of the NIEER Benchmarks.

Rhode Island was one of nine states to receive a grant in the first round of the federal Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). Some of the funds go towards improving the quality of early childhood education programs in high-needs communities. The state will also gather data on children's access to early learning opportunities and link it with kindergarten entry assessment data. RTT-ELC funds will also be used to provide comprehensive, high-quality professional development and technical assistance.

In 2014, Rhode Island was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$2.3 million. Through the Department of Human Services (DHS), Rhode Island complements the federal Head Start program with state funding, to provide additional spaces for children. Funding for this program has remained static for several years. In the 2012-2013 year, approximately \$800,000 from state general funds were used to serve 130 children ages 4 and 5 through this program.

In K-12 education, Rhode Island ranks above the US average for education spending, at \$14,415 per pupil in 2013. Rhode Island scores slightly above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and has a 79.7 percent graduation rate, with a dropout rate slightly higher than neighboring states at 4.2 percent in 2010–2011. Rhode Island reported the lowest total public education expenditures when compared to its neighboring states, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Rhode Island is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union.



The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 72.3 percent of age-eligible children in Rhode Island were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 66.8 percent were attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Rhode Island’s State Prekindergarten Program meets **10** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **three** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	–	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	ND	●	○	●	●

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Historically, leadership and support for the Rhode Island program has primarily come from RIDE. Rhode Island is one of the newer states to have state-funded pre-K, its program is seven years old. The push to begin it was originally driven by the Chair of the Board of Regents, who had read economic studies on pre-K. The then-Commissioner established a demonstration project, followed by the state funding formula being redesigned with a built-in mechanism to increase state investment in pre-K over 10 years.

Some of the political support has made its way to Governor Gina Raimondo’s office. At this point, the Gov. Raimondo, in her first year, has publicly, and within the budget, expressed support for preschool including following through on the Preschool Expansion Grant commitment of adding state dollars to the federal grant. There are not specific champions within the General Assembly for this, although some members have expressed support. Rhode Island is still a state that is struggling economically, so that that may affect the program in the future. The Governor, however, sees it as part of her economic reform strategy.

In Fiscal year 2014, the Rhode Island General Assembly increased its investment in the Rhode Island State Pre-Kindergarten Program by \$500,000. Additionally, two pre-K classrooms were funded with RTT-ELC funds (\$334,000) as part of an exploratory study examining the impact of a high-quality Pre-K classroom on overall program quality. This led to enrollment of an additional 90 children for the year.

Business interests are focused on the economy, and within the state philanthropy is hurting too. On the advocacy front, Rhode Island Kids Count is a strong and effective supporter.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Although the state government seems solidly behind the principles and practice of the program, the strongest vision appears to stem from the agency. Agency staff members are well versed in essential elements of early education, and how to focus on developing a high quality program, but, as noted, there is little outside support at this time. They are now staffed with federal grant dollars; prior to RTT-ELC, the Department had one staff person funded with state dollars. However, they note that the staffing is “still lean given all the work that’s on the table.” The agency and state are thinking carefully now about the infrastructure necessary to continue and sustain the current RTT-ELC and pre-K expansion work. The majority of federal dollars, however, need to be focused on programs, not on the state infrastructure; so although there may be some opportunities to expand staffing and improve infrastructure, they may not be fully realized, as budgets are otherwise constrained.

There is not particularly strong support for the pre-K program outside RIDE. Part of what the agency does is work very hard to help everyone understand that it’s not just children in pre-K: the mixed delivery system means there are children in community programs, Head Start, and public schools. RIDE would appreciate more aligned support from higher education within the state, the institutions preparing early childhood providers are not necessarily research institutions and may need guidance in terms of how best to support pre-K.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** State pre-K teachers must have a Bachelor’s degree with an early childhood teaching diploma. Rhode Island does require paying teachers a competitive salary and benefits and RIDE provides budget guidance, developed with a national expert; they recommend in the RFP and contracts that about 77 percent of the budget should go to salary and benefits. The intent is to ensure salary parity, however although there is probably parity for beginning teachers, that may not be sustained over the long term especially in nonpublic schools operating programs, even after 5 or 6 years. There is a set budget the programs receive, because of the way the program is funded, so that as teachers are paid more, the remaining balance of funds for the program is reduced.

**Adult-child ratios.** The ratio is 1:9 with a maximum class size of 18, which meets the Essential Elements criteria.

**Learning time.** Classes meet 6 hours per day, 5 days per week on an academic year schedule, meeting the requirement.

**Two adults in the classroom.** A teacher and assistant teacher are present in the classroom.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Rhode Island has revised and updated the [Rhode Island Early Learning Standards \(RIELDS\)](#). The RIELDS are comprehensive and address: Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Creative Arts.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Under the comprehensive guidelines, programs must be able to show that the curriculum is aligned to standards. The agency has developed a process under RTT-ELC which takes commonly used early childhood curricula and provides reviews, analysis, and guidance, which they can share with programs, so they can make informed decisions. Moving into the pre-K expansion grant year, they will be taking advantage of the curriculum component, as they ‘want to improve and grow in the use of research-based curriculum in classrooms.’

In the state, there is currently a 'good sense of the holistic view of curriculum, now we want to encourage effective use and implementation.' Last year, the state provided an opportunity for programs to pilot using Creative Curriculum and HighScope. They provided resources and materials, developed a Peer Learning Community, and assessed what they had learned (both teachers and administrators). This year, a significant number of pre-K programs chose to implement Creative Curriculum, since they use TS GOLD as an assessment. It is still a program-level decision, but the state is "moving towards thinking about evidence-based."

**Support for students with special needs.** There is strong support for children with special needs, provided in multiple ways. All programs must become CECE-approved under the Rhode Island standards for preschool within their first year. The standards incorporate measures of inclusion of all children in curriculum, family engagement, administration etc. Inclusion is viewed as a contractual deliverable: programs must develop and maintain collaborative relationships with community partners and fully include children with disabilities and special health care needs in the classrooms. Collaborations with state pre-K providers, referrals and developmental screening, strong professional development and technical assistance are all provided as supports for inclusion.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The Pre-K program provides recruitment and enrollment materials in the family's home language and has policies which require dual language learners (DLLs) be assessed in their home language. State pre-K has additional TA offered through the Center for Early Learning Professionals (CELP); funded through RTT-ELC. CELP supports recommended practices for supporting DLLs in the classroom by providing TA supports directly in classrooms.

According to the US Census Bureau, 21.1 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices.**

**High-quality teaching.** There is currently no CLASS or ECERS data available for review.

**Child assessments.** Programs classrooms are required to use TS GOLD, and to implement recommended practices that support the observations. There is extensive work with TA and PD, on the alignment between standards and the tool, so that programs are able to implement it correctly and using results to inform instruction.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** RI has access to formative assessment data through the statewide use of TS GOLD. Under the RTT-ELC grant, a system to create a Kindergarten Entry data profile is being created.

Rhode Island built resources in the Preschool Expansion Grant for an external evaluation of the pre-K program, and will soon be releasing an RFP. The information will be used to strengthen the program. The evaluation is expected to begin in fall of 2016.

There are two continuous quality systems: BrightStars, Rhode Island's QRIS administered by Rhode Island's AEYC affiliate and RIDE's 2013 Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards for Approval of Preschool and Kindergarten Programs (CECE Standards). CECE Program Approval represents the highest bar in the state's early learning "quality continuum" which begins at DCYF licensing, progresses through BrightStars, the state's QRIS rating process, and culminates in RIDE CECE Approval. Pre-K programs are not required to participate.

In 2009, when the pre-K program was piloting, NIEER was contracted to conduct a randomized control research study to evaluate the effects of Rhode Island's Pre-K pilot program on participating children's early learning outcomes. Children who participated showed significant gains in print knowledge and early math skills compared to a control group.

**Professional development.** RIDE provides training and technical assistance on an ongoing basis. A requirement under CECE standards, is that at least 2 hours per week of paid planning time outside of the classroom should occur.

**Integrated system.** There is an integrated system, with a common formative assessment, and attention to planning and professional development time. There is alignment with child standards, assessment, and curriculum. Professional development is designed to support teachers and programs in meeting those expectations. Data are used to drive the offerings that the Professional Development partner provides. A longitudinal data system is in development that will include at a minimum Kindergarten entry data.

In 2012, as part of the state's work under its RTT-ELC, licensing regulations, the state's QRIS system, and the 2010 CECE standards were revised and aligned to create a "logical pathway for continuous program improvement." The RIELDS and CECE standards are integrated. Teachers are trained on the standards, and there is ongoing training on workforce knowledge and competencies, and on using a curriculum aligned to the early learning standards. Teachers understand the guidelines and sequence for the age range in which they are working.

## Key Contacts

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Rhode Island Assessment/Instruction](#)

[Rhode Island Department of Education](#)

[Rhode Island Kids Count](#)



## South Carolina

### South Carolina 4K and CDEP

South Carolina has two state-funded preschool programs. The Half-Day Child Development Program (also called 4K) was initiated in 1984 by the South Carolina Education Improvement Act. The 4K program provides part-day preschool education to at-risk 4-year-olds. The state requires each school district to have at least one 4K classroom. Districts set their own eligibility criteria from a state-specified list of risk factors that include low parent education, history of foster care, homelessness, teen parents, and low income. State funding for 4K is allocated to districts based on the number of Kindergartener's qualified for free or reduced-price lunch in each district. Most children are served in public schools, but districts may also partner with Head Start programs. About 25 percent of 4K programs provide school-day services using funds from other sources. Program technical assistance and site visits were cut in the 2011-2012 school year due to reductions in staffing.

The Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), the state's second early education initiative, was established in 2006, as a result of Abbeville County School District v. South Carolina. The Court required that school-day preschool be delivered in the counties named in the lawsuit if they offer 4K. Children qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, receiving Medicaid, or with a documented developmental delay are eligible. Approval for public schools to provide CDEPP is granted by the State Department of Education (SCDE), while South Carolina's First Steps to School Readiness program approves private child care centers. Due to staff reductions in the 2011-2012 school year, CDEPP programs received site visits and technical assistance only upon request. The program was assessed in the 2009-2010 school year for both process quality and program impact/child outcomes. Funding was increased by \$26 million this year to provide 4K programs, and will expand again next year. New legislation requires that a readiness assessment be administered to all 4K and 5K students in 2014-2015.

Funding for the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) was codified with the approval of the Read to Succeed legislation in June 2014 with passage of Act 284. Therefore, the South Carolina Child Development Education Program, (now CDEP) is no longer considered to be a pilot. The program was further expanded with added funding in the 2015-16 year.

Across the two programs, enrollment of 4-year-olds declined from 2012-2014, and was 39 percent in 2014. However, in 2014 the percentage of 3-year-olds increased from 4 to 7 percent. State funding per child has been on a downward trend generally, but picked up in 2014 and 2015. Nevertheless, it is extraordinarily low, at less than \$2,000 per child. The CDEP program is better funded, but historically served far fewer children; it also has somewhat higher standards for supports and meets 7 of the 10 NIEER policy benchmarks (missing: BA for lead teacher, CDA for assistant, and site visits), while 4K meets only 6 benchmarks (missing: CDA for assistant, screening/referral, meals, and site visits). South Carolina did not receive either a federal Early Learning Race to the Top grant or a Preschool Expansion grant.

In K-12 education, South Carolina ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> for education spending per child, and reports spending more than neighboring states. Teacher salaries are relatively low compared to national averages and have been modestly declining. South Carolina adopted and then repealed the Common Core, requiring that new standards be produced

within a year. South Carolina enrolls 75 percent of kindergarteners in full day classrooms. South Carolina’s NAEP scores are below the national average and generally worse than for neighboring states. The primary union is the South Carolina Education Association, an affiliate of NEA. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions, South Carolina ranked 49th overall for union power and influence, or "weakest," which was in the fifth of five tiers.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). South Carolina 4K fully meets **three** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **five** others, while **six** were not met and one could not be determined. CDEP meets **four** of the 15 essential elements and partially meets **seven** others, while not meeting **four**. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

### 4K

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	–	●	–	●	●	–	○	–	ND	○	–	–	○

### CDEP

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	–	●	●	●	●	○	○	–	–	○	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Political will begins with Governor Nikki Haley (R) who is viewed as a supporter of quality preschool programs by advocates. Supporters in the legislature include Speaker Jay Lucas and Representative Rita Allison.

As previously described, CDEPP was established in 2006, as a result of Abbeville County School District v. South Carolina. In November of 2014, the state Supreme Court’s latest ruling in Abbeville County School District v. South Carolina reaffirmed the trial court’s earlier ruling that ordered preschool through grade 3 reform. The Supreme



Court did not specify a remedy for the legislature's failure to fully respond to the trial court ruling, but directed the legislature to draw one up rapidly. Two committees of the state legislature are now at work. The plaintiffs have been at work and have petitioned the Court to require the legislature to have a plan by end of the 2016 session. The plaintiffs emphasize the need for a birth to grade 3 policy initiative not just preschool at age 4.

In 2014-2015, South Carolina added another \$27 million to a pre-K budget of roughly \$50 million, a tremendous relative increase, to expand pre-K to an additional 17 districts. This still leaves funding per child at a very low level. However, it appears that additional funding for pre-K is available to districts through Early Childhood Assistance Program and First Steps, however the amount is unknown.

**Compelling visions and strong leadership.** The state's early care and education system is highly fragmented and even the state funded preschool sector consists of multiple programs administered by multiple agencies. 4K is administered by the Office of Early Learning and Literacy, SCDE. CDEP currently is administered in partnership by the SCDE, which oversees participating public school district programs, and South Carolina First Steps for School Readiness (a non-profit organization), which oversees private and other non-district providers. Penny Danielson is the Team Lead for the Office of Early learning and Literacy in SCDE.

First Steps for School Readiness was legislatively created as a nonprofit organization, with a State Board of Trustees that govern the First Steps initiative and created the Office of First Steps to administer and monitor funding for local programs including CDEP (not operating in public schools), ensure programmatic success, provide technical assistance, receive and analyze data from approved and funded programs, provide oversight for the approval of programs, and provide a standardized fiscal accountability system. Each county in South Carolina is served by a First Steps Partnership.

The Institute for Child Success (ICS) in Greenville is a research and policy organization that fosters public and private partnerships to align and improve resources for the success of young children in South Carolina (and beyond). Philanthropies engaged in supporting early education in South Carolina include: the Mary Black Foundation, BCBS foundation and corporation, the Duke Endowment, and United Way. The Greenville and Charleston United Ways jointly engage a contract lobbying firm, which is same one used by ICS. Three statewide organizations—Children's Trust of South Carolina, the Institute for Child Success and United Way Association of South Carolina—and a long list of statewide partners have agreed to one 2015 Early Childhood Common Agenda for South Carolina that offers specific recommendations to build a comprehensive early childhood system for children, birth-5 years old.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** The 4K program only operates in public schools; teachers are required to have a BA plus an early learning credential. Teachers in CDEP classrooms are required to be early childhood certified and experienced in teaching young children, but do not need a BA. There is salary parity between pre-K and K-3 teachers but only in the CDEP program, however since teachers are not required to have a BA the program does not meet the criteria for this Essential Element.

**Adult-child ratios.** South Carolina has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** The 4K program is part day. CDEP is 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week for a minimum of 180 days.

**Two adults in the classroom.** In both programs a teacher and an assistant are required when the classroom has more than 10 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** South Carolina has comprehensive, well-designed learning standards called Good Start, Grow Smart for state-supported programs for children ages 3 to 5. The South Carolina Early Learning Standards apply to all settings in which children receive care and education (but are not mandatory for licensed child care).

These Early Learning Standards are being revised and are intended to align with South Carolina K-12 Academic Standards and the Head Start Child Outcomes.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The CDEP program requires the use of a research-based curriculum and specifies four choices: Creative, High Scope, Montessori, and Opening the World of Learning (OWL, 2005 edition). The state does not have a coordinated system to offer training on the curriculum. 4K does not have curriculum requirements.

**Support for students with special needs.** Dual enrollment in public school system preschool disabilities classes and CDEP is acceptable, ensuring that inclusion is a recommended model. The CDEP program priority is to serve economic at-risk children first. Any slots that have not been filled with eligible children may be filled with special education children that do not meet the economic eligibility.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** South Carolina does not have state policies to support dual language learners (DLLs). According to the US Census Bureau, 6.6 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** ECERS or CLASS scores were not available for 4K. In 2009-2010 a third-party evaluation conducted CLASS observations of 50 CDEP classrooms. The average CLASS score on Instructional Support was 2.0 (on a 7.0 scale); Classroom Organization was 4.5; and emotional support 5.1. The range of Instructional Support for the classrooms was 1.0-4.8.

**Child assessments.** After soliciting input from state stakeholders, the following three formative assessments were selected and approved by the State Board of Education on June 10, 2015 for administration with prekindergarten 4-year-olds: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS); Individual Growth and Development Indicators (MyIGDIs), and TS GOLD.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** It is in statute (South Carolina Section 59-125-160) that an evaluation of the effectiveness of First Steps, including CDEP operating in non-public schools, is to be conducted by an external evaluator and an evaluation report is to be provided to the South Carolina General Assembly every three years. The legislation also stipulated that the external evaluation be supervised by a three-person committee with two committee members to be appointed by the General Assembly and one by the First Steps Board of Trustees.

4K has not had a formal third-party evaluation. CDEP was formally evaluated in 2009-2010.

**Professional development.** The statewide systemic approach to professional development has been limited by lack of funding in recent years. SCDE CDEP staff provides technical assistance to CDEP district coordinators, directors and teachers upon request through email, phone correspondence and requisite on-site visits. First Steps Regional Coordinators make both announced and unannounced monitoring and technical assistance visits to funded 4K classrooms throughout the school year. These technical assistance visits may include unannounced evaluative monitoring using an ERS Assessment appropriate to measure the curricular fidelity. Deficiencies noted during monitoring visits will be reviewed with the program administrator and shall form the basis of a Programmatic Improvement and Technical Assistance Plan.

**Integrated system.** Standards, curriculum, program self-assessment, professional development and instruction are aligned and integrated at the state and program levels.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

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[http://scchildren.org/advocacy\\_and\\_media/early\\_childhood\\_common\\_agenda/](http://scchildren.org/advocacy_and_media/early_childhood_common_agenda/)

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Griggs, M. (ICS) Public 4-K in South Carolina <http://www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/publications.php>

[South Carolina Child Development Program 2015-16 Public School Guidelines](#)



## Tennessee

### Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K

Building upon the 1998 Early Childhood Education Pilot Project, Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) was launched in 2005 following enactment of the [Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act](#). By 2012, every district offered at least one full-day VPK classroom where low-income children receive priority enrollment. Enrollment growth stalled in 2008, and in 2014 approximately 18,000 at-risk children were served, or 22 percent of the state's 4-year-olds in 2014.

Only public schools are eligible to apply for state-funded VPK grants through a competitive process. Districts may, however, contract with private child care agencies, Head Start agencies, institutions of higher education, public housing authorities, and any three-star rated community-based or private child-serving agency where lead teachers are licensed in early childhood education. Programs contracted to provide VPK services must operate within the jurisdiction of the school district.

Since its inception, VPK has relied on numerous funding sources, including general education revenue and, in the past, lottery revenue and federal TANF funds. State funds for the VPK program have been level funded since the 2014 school year. Federal Head Start, IDEA, Title I, and other funds are used to provide the required local match. State appropriations for VPK have remained relatively flat in recent years. Per child spending was approximately \$4,600 in 2014, well below the \$8,254 spent in 2002 in the pilot program. However, it is approximately equal to the state funding per child for K-12.

Tennessee's VPK meets 9 of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks; it is preferred that assistant teachers have a CDA or AA, however the LEA may hire one with a high school diploma and relevant experience working with ECE programs and demonstrate progress toward completion of a CDA or AA.

In 2014, Tennessee was awarded a competitive federal Preschool Development Grant for \$17.5 million.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Peabody Research Institute (PRI) at Vanderbilt University was involved in the fifth year of an ongoing external evaluation on the effectiveness of the VPK program. [The study](#) reported statistically significant gains for VPK participants during the pre-K year and a significant reduction in kindergarten retention for participants. However, by grade three the control group has higher achievement than the preschool group. These results are difficult to explain and may not be due to the preschool program (sampling problems in the study, a competitive response by the control group to being denied the preschool program, policies regarding special education placement beginning in pre-K and K-3 practice may influence the results). However, other evidence indicates that the vast majority of Tennessee preschool classrooms at the time of the study were less than good.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 78.4 percent of age-eligible children in Tennessee were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 77.9 percent were attending full-day programs.

In K-12 education, Tennessee ranks 46<sup>th</sup> for education spending per child, on average \$8,208 per pupil, about the same amount as Mississippi. Tennessee’s NAEP scores are similar to the national average at grade 4. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions, Tennessee ranked 41st overall for union power and influence, or "weak." Tennessee schools reported a graduation rate of 86.3 percent during 2012-2013, highest among its neighboring states.

**Essential Elements**

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Tennessee meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	○	●	●	●	●	–	●	○	–	–	○	–	–

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

**Rationale**

**Enabling Environment**

Tennessee has a moderately strong enabling environment formed by the collaborative work of elected officials, state agencies, and business leaders, all of which are aligned on delivering pre-K for at-risk 4-year-olds through VPK.

**Political will.** Political will has been historically evident from the Governor’s Office through the legislature. Strong bipartisan support was evident with the passage of the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005 and support continues though state funding for the program has not increased in recent years. Gov. Haslam is intent on maintaining support for VPK, though publicly most attention has been placed on early literacy in third grade. Support comes from key legislators such as Sen. Dolores Gresham (Ed.) and House Education representatives Harry Brookes (Chair, Ed. Admin.) and John Fogety (Chair, Ed. Instruction). The majority of legislators and the Governor supported Tennessee’s successful application for federal Preschool Development grant funds; one legislator balked, feeling every community should benefit from the federal grant, not just Nashville and Memphis areas. Rep. Bill Dunn is an outspoken critic of VPK and introduced legislation in 2015 to allow VPK to operate as a 6-week summer program. The bill did not advance and is likely to reappear. The [Tennessee Department of Education](#) has advised the Governor regarding summer program options. It is unclear how much political will may be weakened by the negative findings from the PRI Vanderbilt study, but one legislative reaction may be that K-3 and not pre-K is the problem.

Leadership for early education also extends to business. ReadyNation (Sarah Watson, Ex. Dir.) worked with key Tennessee business and community leaders to send a letter in support of early education to Sen. Lamar Alexander. Signatories include leaders from the CEOs of Chambers of Commerce in Memphis (Phil Trenary), Knoxville (Mike Edwards), Nashville (Ralph Schulz) and Chattanooga (Bill Kilbride), in addition to leaders from healthcare (Mickey

Bilbrey, Pres/CEO, Quorum Health; Gary Shorb, CEO, Methodist LeBonheur Healthcare) and financial sectors (Randy Laszewski, KPMG; John Carson, Jr., Raymond James Financial). More recently, a ReadyNation letter signed by 14 business leaders was sent to the General Assembly supporting VPK. Blair Taylor, President of Memphis Tomorrow remains a strong proponent of early education. United Ways of Tennessee also identify pre-K as a top priority, providing nearly \$1 million in local matching funds for pre-K classrooms throughout the state. Support from non-urban areas business leaders is less visible.

The most prominent advocates for early education in Tennessee are families and local school leaders who actively engage legislators when concerns about VPK are raised. The effectiveness of advocacy throughout the state is unclear. However, Tennessee Voices for Children (Rikki Harris, CEO) has a presence in three offices throughout the state. Council for a Strong America (Diane Halstead) also has an active presence and involvement. The Tennessee Alliance for Early Education (TAEE) has provided strong leadership for the advocacy and advancement of early childhood education in the past. Tennessee AEYC continues to advocate for strong early education programs in the state as do other education organizations. Kidcentral TN has pulled together to address school readiness and encourage the implementation of a school readiness model.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Within state government, the onus of leadership is borne by the Tennessee Department of Education and its DECE which administers VPK. State Superintendent Candice McQueen, a proponent of early education recently unveiled the Tennessee Succeeds strategic plan to local superintendents. The plan identifies early foundations for learning and literacy as the first of five key goals. Tennessee policy requires students to demonstrate reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Lisa Wiltshire was recently appointed DECE Executive Director, bringing a background in early education. She is assisted by veteran Director of Early Childhood Programs Connie Casha. Capacity within DECE remains extremely limited to address multiple initiatives, including a Preschool Development Grant.

Institutions of higher education (IHE) are actively engaged with early childhood education, notably Vanderbilt, University of Tennessee – Chattanooga, and University of Memphis with Capella University offering an online option. The community college system offers CDA, EC Technical Certificates, and Associate degrees. Vanderbilt also houses the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Learning, and the Peabody Institute has been engaged in a longitudinal study of the pre-K program.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Tennessee requires each classroom to have a lead teacher with a BA plus an early learning credential. Lead teachers in public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules, but there is no requirement for equal pay for lead teachers in nonpublic schools if not hired by the LEA. Nevertheless, the vast majority of teachers are in public schools with 44 percent having an MA degree and 57 percent a BA.

The LEA is required to hire an assistant teacher with a CDA or AA if one is available. If not, the LEA may hire one with a high school diploma and relevant experience working with ECE programs and the assistant must demonstrate progress toward completion of a CDA or AA. Assistant teachers in public schools are paid on par with district salary schedules, with no compensation requirements for those in nonpublic schools.

**Adult-child ratios.** Tennessee has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. Maximum class size for 3-year-olds is 16 and staff-child ratio of 1:8. In mixed-age groups, a maximum of eight 3-year-olds can be in the class with twelve 4-year-olds. If there are nine or more 3-year-olds, the classroom capacity

is 16. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** Children attend VPK five days per week during the school year and services are provided for a minimum of 5.5 instructional hours per day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As indicated previously, a BA-level lead teacher with specialization and assistant teacher with at least a CDA or working toward one are present at all times during the 5.5 hour education program. Itinerant specialists such as special educators may also be present to deliver targeted or specialized services.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Tennessee Early Childhood Developmental Learning Standards (TN ELDS) were first developed in 2004 to provide documentation of the continuum of developmental milestones from birth through age five. TN ELDS for four-year-olds were revised in 2011 and adopted in 2012. In April 2015, Governor Haslam signed House Bill 1035, creating committees to review the state's K-12 English and Math standards in order to recommend new ones for implementation by the 2017-2018 school year. This law effectively allows Common Core to be replaced in Tennessee.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Tennessee maintains a list of approved curricula for the state funded pre-K Programs to choose from. This list includes 22 “comprehensive” curricula and 13 additional supplemental curricula. These lists include curricula that have been found to be ineffective ([WWC](#)). State rules require teachers dedicate 2.5 hours per week for curriculum planning, however there are not statewide curriculum training supports.

Tennessee Reads provides resources to teachers, families and others to improve both reading and math.

**Support for students with special needs.** TDE actively promotes inclusive settings for children in VPK. Children with IEPs are considered as Tier 2 priority for enrollment in the VPK program after ensuring all income-eligible students are enrolled. All special education students enrolled in VPK participate 5 days a week, and provisions of the child’s individualized education plan (IEP) are incorporated into the program. DECE is currently developing guidance for LEAs to more actively encourage blending general and special education services.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** The state regulates ELL services for K-12 students but, because pre-K is not mandatory, LEAs are not required to provide ELL services. However, all programs include pre-K children in ELL screening and provide some level of service as appropriate. Although no policy requires services for pre-K, there are opportunities for professional development afforded to pre-K teachers, information is presented to families in primary language, and translators are made available when needed. Tennessee was unable to report the number of ELL students served in pre-K. Tennessee has adopted WIDA standards, which support academic language development and academic achievement for linguistically diverse students.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Tennessee promotes strong teacher-child interactions and uses ECERS, ELLCO, and the Pyramid Model to help assure appropriate pedagogy is occurring. Developmentally appropriate practices are expected for all VPK programs. The PRI study raises questions about the quality of teaching. ECERS data collected by PRI on a statewide sample find that the average score is about 4 with the Activities subscale at 3 (scale 1–7). Only a very small fraction of classrooms scored 5 or higher overall.



**Child assessments.** There is no mandated design list of formative assessments for pre-K, nor are programs required to assess students. Despite lack of state requirements, programs commonly use TS GOLD, Work Sampling System, or other assessment tools for formative assessment purposes. TN is working on developing a contract with Maryland to adopt their Kindergarten Readiness assessment. The state currently does not collect information or provide training on formative assessment using child assessment data. As previously noted, the state rules require teachers dedicate 2.5 hours per week for curriculum planning which would include formative assessment.

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, developed by the Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at Vanderbilt is reported to be widely applied for improving teaching strategies and assessment.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Program quality is monitored annually by consultants through on-site visits and state personnel desk reviews of classroom quality assessment (ECERS, ELLCO) results with program level outcomes incorporated into a program plan for continuous improvement. Limited DECE capacity and the lack of a requirement for programs to assess children's performance hampers the state's ability to make additional informed decisions based on data.

As previously noted, PRI at Vanderbilt has been conducting an evaluation of the VPK. The first part of the study is longitudinal, following children through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The second component examines kindergarten readiness. Findings have been mixed. Children in the VPK program were better prepared for kindergarten as compared to those that did not attend VPK. However, by the end of kindergarten there were no significant differences between the two groups on achievement measures and in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the VPK children scored lower on most measures. These results will raise questions regarding VPK's lasting effect. PRI has received additional funding to continue to follow a portion of the children through their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year (2018-2019).

**Professional development.** All lead teachers working in public schools must meet the state requirement of 30 hours of in-service PD per year. The 18 hours required in early childhood for preschool teachers may count toward this total. DECE sponsors training in the Pyramid model of early intervention (2-days), developmentally appropriate practice aligned with TN ELDS, Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO), and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). Most teachers identify other sources of professional development. There is no state-level system for coaching and mentoring, so it is difficult to determine to what extent, if any, this occurs in local programs.

**Integrated system.** Lack of child assessment data and integration into the state longitudinal data system limits Tennessee ability to have a comprehensive, fully integrated system. State statute mandates that an LEA may contract only with those agencies that have received the highest star rating (three stars) from the QRIS administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS), the licensing agency for all child care programs. LEA classrooms are not required to participate in the QRIS. However, all community-based and Head Start child care facilities monitored by DHS must have received the highest star rating in order to partner with the LEA to offer VPK. The QRIS system requires ECERS observations but does not incorporate the use of TN ELDS or a formative child assessment.

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## Resources

### 2013-14 Tennessee Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Fact Sheet

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Lipsey, M.W., Farran D.C., Hofer, K.G. (2015) A Randomized control trial of the effects of a statewide voluntary prekindergarten program on children's skills and behaviors through third grade (research report). Nashville, TN: Peabody Research Institute at Vanderbilt University.

Lipsey, M.W., Hofer, K.G., Dong, N., Farran, D.C., & Bilbrey, C. (August 2013). Evaluation of the Tennessee Voluntary Prekindergarten Program: Kindergarten and first grade follow-up results from the randomized control design. Nashville, TN: Peabody Research Institute at Vanderbilt University.

### Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005



## Texas

### Texas Public School Pre-K

Texas Public School Prekindergarten began offering half-day preschool services to at-risk 4-year-olds in 1985. School districts with 15 or more eligible 4-year-olds must offer the program. Eligibility is determined by: homelessness, qualifying for a free or reduced-price lunch (185 percent of the FPL), limited English proficiency, participation in foster care, or a parent on active military duty or who has been injured or killed on active duty. A Texas school district may extend its prekindergarten program to include 3-year-old children who meet eligibility requirements. Districts can choose to enroll non-eligible students, but parents must pay tuition. State funds are distributed directly to school districts, which are encouraged to collaborate with licensed child care centers and Head Start. The Prekindergarten program is financed through both state and local funds. Funding for half-day services is based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA), and is provided through the Foundation School Program, as part of the K-12 funding system.

In 2013-2014, 85 percent of school districts provided pre-K and more than 50 percent of all 4-year-olds were enrolled. About 47 percent of those enrolled attended for a full day supported by additional local funding. Total funding for the program in 2015 was \$821 million. The Texas program met 2 out of 10 of NIEER's quality standards benchmarks in the year 2013-2014. Texas is a strong local control state, and the only benchmarks met were for quality standards and hours of in-service training. Teachers in programs outside the public schools are not required to have a BA. There are no class size limits in any setting. The 2015 legislation seeks to improve policy and practice by offering a financial incentive rather than through mandates and would, for example, cap class size at 22 with two adults.

In K-12 education, Texas ranked 45<sup>th</sup> for education spending, at \$8,299 per pupil in 2013, despite the fact that Texas is ranked 25<sup>th</sup> by per capita income. State funding for public education including pre-K is under review currently in school finance lawsuit awaiting a ruling from the Texas Supreme Court. Texas reports a graduation rate that is well above average, at 88 percent, and 2015 NAEP test scores are at or above the national average in math, but below the national average in reading. In particular, the Texas 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP reading score was well below average, with Texas ranking 40<sup>th</sup>. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions and Texas ranked 44th overall for union power and influence out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, or "weakest," which was the fifth of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 79 percent of age-eligible children in Texas were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013 with 86 percent of those attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). The Texas Program meets **one** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **six** others. Current practice in the field is highly variable in the more than 1,000 school districts in Texas, and some large districts are already considerably better

than state policy or guidance would require. A few may have all 15 essential elements or be very close. However, even at the local level, consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy. We have provided in the resources section a link to a report from the organization Children at Risk that gives individual district descriptions of pre-K policy and practice.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	—	○	—	—	—	●	—	—	—	ND	○	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    — Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** State funding for preschool was about \$800 million in 2015. The amount is large because Texas is such a populous state and has enrolled more than half of its 4-year-olds. However, Texas has never had adequate spending per child, and that spending was reduced further in the aftermath of the recession. Enrollment as a percentage of the population remained at about 52 percent at age 4, despite reduced state spending due in part to local commitment. The lack of standards also permits unlimited growth in class size and ratio or reducing hours.

Recently, Gov. Greg Abbott (R) has championed increased quality, and largely succeeded in having his proposals to incentivize quality enhancement partially supported by the legislature in 2015. The 2015 Texas Legislature responded when Gov. Abbott made pre-kindergarten quality an “emergency” priority. Speaker of the House Joe Straus (R–San Antonio) supported the Governor’s prekindergarten bill, House Bill 4. Highlights of the passed bill include new data reporting requirements for school districts about pre-K class size, student to staff ratios, and assessments used. The legislation was also attached to a \$118 appropriation over two years, partially restoring the more than \$200 million cut from pre-K as part of \$5.4 billion in education budget cuts in 2011 that touched off the latest school finance lawsuit in Texas.

The extent to which districts will actually receive funding to implement sustained quality improvements in pre-K program remains to be seen. What has been won so far is a one-session appropriation of a comparatively small amount of funding when spread across two years. The first test of interest in the quality prekindergarten program will be applications for the new funding in spring 2016. Rules and regulations for the new grant program are on the front burner for the Texas Education Agency (TEA). TEA is currently accepting public comment on the administration of the funds. Note that overall funding for quality does not increase if there is an overwhelmingly positive response, but the amount per child awarded would be cut so that the per-child amounts specified in the bill for quality enhancement are essentially upper limits.

The Tea Party Caucus led opposition to the bill, particularly the “Grassroots Advisory Board” of Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick. After the bill passed out of the House of Representatives, representatives of the Advisory Board released a memo opposing the Governor’s pre-K bill. The Caucus was also successful in putting a statutory cap on funding for the grant program created of \$130 million for the current fiscal biennium.

There are private sector supporters of increased quality in pre-K. Raise Your Hand Texas is an education advocacy group supportive of high quality pre-K. The Texas Education Grantmakers' Advocacy Consortium has pooled funding for prekindergarten research and advocacy. Current membership includes almost 35 Texas foundations. The state's largest two chambers of commerce (Dallas Chamber of Commerce and Greater Houston Partnership) have been strong supporters of efforts to improve pre-K quality and access.

A ruling in a Texas school finance case, which includes pre-K, is expected by some experts early in 2016. Last August, now-retired state District Judge John Dietz (a Democrat) struck down the state's system of funding schools as unconstitutional. Despite changes lawmakers enacted in 2013, including a \$3.9 billion funding boost to public education, Judge Dietz found that the state provided inadequate funding, and identified flaws in the way the state distributes money to school districts. There is some expectation that the Court will rule at least partly in favor of the plaintiffs, which would likely result in a special session of the legislature in 2016. All nine members of the Court are Republicans.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** TEA has one staff person responsible for supporting its pre-K program. Additional support is provided by Texas Education Service Centers. Susan Landry and her organization at the [Texas Health Sciences Center](#) have supported early childhood efforts throughout the state. In addition, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) (now part of American Institutes for Research) has early childhood expertise and is eager to assist the state. Federally funded technical assistance is provided by CEELo and the Texas Comprehensive Center.

House Bill 4 allows for TEA to increase staffing as necessary to implement the bill. However, the Agency as a whole remains crippled by budget cuts and under-staffing. HB 4 is big and complex. TEA will find it challenging to acquire the staff necessary to appropriately administer and monitor the implementation of the legislation.

The announced resignation of the Texas Education Commissioner opens the door for a new Commissioner who could make pre-K a greater priority. Many capitol observers in Texas believe the next Commissioner will most likely come from within educational circles. Given most current superintendents' strong support for pre-K, this would bode well for pre-K.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Teachers in public schools are required to have a Bachelor's degree, but this is not the case if districts contract with private providers. Specialization in early childhood is not required. Salaries and benefits of teachers within the public schools are presumed to be in line with those of other district teachers. The new quality legislation (HB 4) requires a specialization in early childhood, but permits this to be satisfied through a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, among other routes. TEA must more specifically determine high-quality prekindergarten teacher qualification requirements under HB 4. The law permits districts to contract with private providers, and if such provision is expanded it could increase the percentage of pre-K teachers who do not receive pay and benefits comparable to those of teachers in public schools.

**Adult-child ratios.** Texas has no maximum class size, but the quality legislation specifies a class size of 22 and requires an assistant teacher if more than 11 children are enrolled, making the adult-child ratio 1:11. HB 4 will require that data on class size and ratio be collected for the first time. Children at Risk, a Houston-based child advocacy organization, [surveyed](#) 631 school districts (enrolling 73 percent of the student population). They found that 59 percent of school districts surveyed had more restrictive policies in place for class size limits and/or staff to child ratios; and that 82 percent of the 560 answering this question reported an average class size of 20 or fewer

while 94 percent reported an average class size of 22 or fewer. Of course, this is average class size so that even among these a substantial number of classrooms could exceed 22 children.

**Learning time.** Programs are required only to provide a half-day program, but many choose to offer a full day (defined as 7 hours) and the new quality money can be used to support a full day. In 2015, 47 percent of classrooms were full day.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Texas does not require two adults in a pre-K classroom. In the Children at Risk study, 55 percent of 460 districts answering this question reported a ratio no greater than 1:11, and the largest ratio reported was 1 staff to 25 students, with 21 percent reporting average ratios of 1:16 to 1:25. HB 4 requires that districts receiving quality funds have no more than a 1:11 ratio. It also requires that TEA and the Department of Family and Protective Services conduct a joint study to develop recommendations regarding optimal class sizes and student to teacher ratios for prekindergarten classes.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Since 2008, the voluntary Texas Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines have been applied statewide. Training on the guidelines is provided by 20 Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), which also offer professional development and technical assistance to early childhood education providers within that area. In addition, TEA provides online professional development regarding the Guidelines through Dr. Landry's Children's Learning Institute. First drafts of new revisions to the Guidelines were published in November of 2015.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state does not require or approve curricula. Teachers can receive support through organizations including the Children's Learning Institute, depending on district policy. Curriculum support is very district-dependent. HB 4 requires that districts receiving the quality funds select a curriculum that aligns with the Guidelines, but does not rely on the Common Core. Currently there is wide variation in curriculum and district support for its implementation. Dallas uses OWL, has one coach for every 15 teachers providing individualized feedback, and uses Adaptive Quality Checklists to assess practice regularly. Fort Worth uses curriculum developed by the district, using a CIRCLE approach with CPALLS+ used to evaluate instruction, make decisions on professional development, and assess child progress. Houston used Frog Street and its assessments, but replaced those assessments in 2014-2015 with CPALLS+ administered three times per year.

**Support for students with special needs.** School districts are required to provide instruction to children with disabilities, based on the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Eligible children may receive special education services in a variety of settings including prekindergarten, resource, and self-contained classrooms, or in such community settings as Head Start and private preschool programs. HB 4 does not discuss inclusion.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** State policy does not mandate or regulate services for English Language Learners (ELLs) in pre-K. The state's criterion for eligibility based on language is that a child "is unable to speak and comprehend the English language." The Guidelines have been translated into Spanish. HB 4 does not address this issue and TEA has no capacity dedicated to supporting districts in serving preschool ELLs.

The Texas Public School Prekindergarten commonly provides several supports to ELLs including professional development for teachers around supporting ELLs, screening and assessing children in their home language, providing information to parents in their primary language, and sending a home language survey home at the beginning of the school year. State policy permits bilingual, monolingual non-English, and dual language immersion classes in pre-K, and requires that the quality of bilingual instruction is monitored. Transitional bilingual programs

and summer language programs are available and children are permitted to be pulled out of the classroom for English language instruction.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** We could find no statewide data on observed classroom quality using CLASS or ECERS-R. Some information regarding teaching practice can be obtained from the district portraits in the Children at Risk report.

**Child assessments.** The use of child assessments varies by district. Some districts are guided by supports from the Children's Learning Institute. Many districts report that they use assessments to inform instruction and make decisions about professional development. HB 4 requires TEA to establish a list of commissioner-approved pre-kindergarten assessment instruments. Districts receiving quality funds under HB 4 are required to assess child progress in pre-K and must choose from the approved list. Texas is developing a new KEA.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Currently, TEA monitors the pre-K grantees through the submission of "periodic activity/progress reports, a final evaluation report, and other activities related to the evaluation of the program...These reports will be used by the TEA to evaluate the implementation and progress of grant-funded programs and to determine if modifications or adjustments to the program are necessary."

HB 4 will require districts that receive quality funds to conduct evaluations (and to make the results available to parents). It also requires the state agency to evaluate the effectiveness of HB 4 funding in improving student learning and to identify effective instructional strategies implemented by school districts with a report of results no later than December 2018 and again in subsequent even-numbered years.

This has been largely district-driven. However, there are two statewide outcome evaluations conducted at universities (Huston et al., 2012; Kuhne, 2008).

**Professional development.** Teachers are required to obtain 150 clock hours of professional development in every five years of service. HB 4 requires TEA to develop additional prekindergarten professional development opportunities. The Texas Early Learning Council developed an online mentoring [tool kit](#). There is not a statewide approach to coaching and limited information is available to degree in which coaching is used in pre-K.

**Integrated system.** HB 4 introduces some elements of an integrated system. Curriculum is to be aligned with the state Guidelines and districts must have an aligned assessment of child progress. Districts are directed to appropriately evaluate their programs based on child progress. Some large districts appear to have fairly integrated systems.

Pre-K in Texas appears to be highly variable with some strong pre-K programs among Texas' many large districts. For example, Spring Branch ISD offers all 4-year-olds a full-day program. The program is developmentally appropriate and inclusive. The curriculum is research-based and supported on line. Dual language immersion programs are available. Transportation is provided. Kindergarten is full day and considered part of the same early childhood system as pre-K.



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[House Bill 4 and High-Quality Prekindergarten Programs \(very brief\)](#)

[House Bill 4 and High-Quality Prekindergarten Program](#) (more information)

[House Bill 4 proposed administrative rules](#)

[Early Childhood Data System \(ECDS\) for Prekindergarten](#) (March 2015)

[Free online pre-k learning platform available](#) (February 2015)



## Vermont

### Vermont Early Education Initiative, Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62

In 1987, the Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI) was created as an annual competitive grant program to finance early education opportunities for at-risk 3- to 5-year-olds. Eligible children must meet one of the following criteria: family income at or below 185 percent of the FPL, limited English proficiency, a history of mistreatment or neglect, a developmental delay, or social isolation. School districts and community early care and education programs must partner for an EEI grant, though either entity may serve as the grantee. EEI funds can be used to provide preschool education services to 3- and 4-year-olds, and so is included in this report, though it is not the state's designated pre-K program.

Act 62 was signed into law in 2007. It reaffirms a long-standing practice of state and local support for publicly-funded prekindergarten education for 3-5 year old children by schools and private programs. While not a mandatory program for towns or children, it allows interested communities to provide limited early education services in quality settings. With Act 62, pre-K programs are supported through the state's Education Fund in the same way as K-12.

In the 2014 Legislative Session, legislators passed and Governor Shumlin signed [Act 166](#) which requires all Vermont school districts to provide universal publicly funded prekindergarten education for a minimum of ten hours per week for 35 weeks annually for all 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children who are not enrolled in kindergarten. Act 166 was to come into effect on July 1, 2015. However, as a consequence of the Transition Relief Bulletin, school districts may opt to wait until July 1, 2016 to fully implement Act 166. With the passage of Act 166, several of the provisions in the Act 62 rules have been replaced. However, the sections of the law and rules regarding partnerships, districts' voluntary participation, access, and tuition payments remain the same. EEI grants will be available to programs or Supervisory Unions not implementing Act 166 in 2015-2016. After this year, EEI funding will end.

Prior to Act 166, districts were not required to provide pre-K programs. In 2013-2014, roughly 80 percent of Vermont's local education agencies (LEAs) provided pre-K through an arrangement of school-based programs and partnerships with private family-based or center-based providers, private preschools, and/or with Head Start programs. Originally, the state limited the number of pre-K children a district could count in its school census. In the 2011-2012 school year, limitations were lifted in all participating towns. With the passage of Act 166, all districts must offer pre-K.

EEI and Act 62 meet four of 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks, both programs missing the benchmarks for teacher and assistant teacher degrees; screening/referral and support services are determined locally; no meals are required; the state does not formally require monitoring except for financial reports and a program's annual report, including child progress data. EEI misses the benchmark for teacher specialization and Act 62 does not meet the required 15 hours of PD per year.

In December 2014, Vermont was awarded \$7.3 million of what is expected to be a \$33 million, four-year Preschool Expansion grant to create full-time, comprehensive, high quality preschool experiences for four-year-olds in families

with incomes under 200 percent of the FPL. In December 2013, Vermont was awarded a \$36.9 million Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant to help ensure all Vermont children, especially those with high needs (e.g., children in poverty, children in protective services), are ready to succeed when they enter kindergarten.

In K-12 education, Vermont reported one of the highest rates of per pupil spending in the country at \$16,377 in 2012-2013. Only five states had higher per pupil spending. Vermont’s graduation rate is above average at 86.6 percent and NAEP test scores are above the national average for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. In 2012-2013, 52 percent of fourth graders in Vermont scored at or above proficient on the NAEP math test, fifth highest in the nation. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now rankings of state teacher unions Vermont ranked 11th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week’s Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood’s Academic Countdown* reports 74.2 percent of age-eligible children in Vermont were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; 73.5 percent attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Vermont’s three programs, Act 166, Act 62, and EEI are included in this evaluation since the three programs will merge and have the same requirements in 2016-2017. Vermont meets **seven** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **four** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

### Vermont Act 62, Act 166, EEI

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	–	●	–	●	●	–	●	○	–	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Gov. Peter Shumlin (D) has been seen as a strong supporter of pre-K and other early childhood issues. He will not seek re-election to a fourth term in office during the 2016 elections. In his [2015 Budget Address](#) announced, “We have had many successes. I am proud that my Administration secured two highly competitive early childhood grants, attracting \$70 million dollars in federal funds to help give our youngest Vermonters a strong start.”

As previously mentioned Act 166 establishes universal access to publicly funded pre-K for all 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds who are not enrolled in Kindergarten. All Vermont school districts must provide universal publicly funded prekindergarten education for a minimum of ten hours per week for 35 weeks annually. Act 166 was to come into effect on July 1, 2015. However, as a consequence of the Transition Relief Bulletin, school districts may opt to wait

until July 1, 2016 to fully implement Act 166. This Act was passed because some school districts opted out of pre-K in Act 62. With Act 166, if a pre-K program is on a qualified list of providers, then the school must reimburse that pre-K provider for pre-K services when they occur.

In July 2015, Vermont Birth to Three and the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative combined to form Vermont Birth to Five which is the advocacy arm of the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children (Rick Davis, Co-founder/Pres.; Alyson Richards, CEO). Ms. Richards previously worked on Gov. Shumlin's early childhood initiatives and federal grants. The Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children, the A.D. Henderson Foundation, and the Turrell Fund have been building capacity in community based pre-K programs through a mentoring project for pre-K programs.

Other advocacy groups include Vermont Early Childhood Alliance who analyzed the Act 166 budget; and Voices for Vermont's Children (Carlen Finn, Exec. Dir.) who advocate for "the full spectrum of child, youth and family issues— from child care and access to health care coverage for children and youth to juvenile justice and child welfare," and organize coalitions and publish Vermont's KIDS COUNT data. The Vermont Business Roundtable is comprised of 120 CEOs of Vermont's profit and not-for-profit employers and has been active in supporting pre-K legislation and funding.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Melissa Riegel-Garrett has been the Program Coordinator for Vermont's pre-K efforts (EEI, Act 62, and Act 166) for the Integrated Support and Learning, PreK–Middle School Division, Agency of Education (ISL/AOE), since April 2015. Prior to this role, she served as the Executive Director for Vermont's AEYC. She has a solid early childhood background and experience as a program director. ISL/AOE currently has a staff of two and there are two vacancies.

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) (Hal Cohen, Secretary) is the umbrella agency for six health and human services related departments including Department of Children and Families (DCF) that administers the QRIS system, STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS). DCF implements components of Act 62 and EEI.

Act 166, is co-administered by AHS and AOE, rules are being promulgated by AOE in conjunction with AHS. Prior approval from AOE and AHS must be received before a school district may establish or expand a school operated pre-K program. If a program has three STARS or fewer then an improvement plan must be approved by both secretaries. School districts can establish a pre-K region that has implications for payment to community-based organizations that are serving Act 166 children. After the hearings and public comment period, both secretaries need to approve or deny the regions.

AOE's Secretary Holcombe has been supportive of Act 166 and has been active in working out some of the implementation challenges, including staff fingerprinting requirements for community based programs and religious programs that have been approved to offer pre-K services.

In AHS, the DCF Deputy Commissioner in the Child Development Division is Reeva Murphy who also serves as the CCDF Administrator. This Division oversees the State HS Collaboration Office (Ben Allen, Director), child care licensing, and STARS, Vermont's QRIS. The two leads for the federal grants are Karin Edwards for the Preschool Expansion Grant and Julie Cadwallader Staub for the RTT-ELC grant.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Both Act 62 and EEI lead teachers in public settings must have a BA with an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) birth to grade 3 or Early Childhood Special Educator (ECSE) birth-age 5 certification.

For nonpublic school settings EEI teachers can have EC Special Educator (birth through 6 years) certificate or an AA or CDA. Act 62 teachers in nonpublic school settings can have a Child Care post-secondary certificate or an AA or CDA. In both programs, these teachers must meet child care licensing requirements.

Assistant teachers must have an AA or equivalent and must meet highly qualified standards in public settings. In nonpublic settings, there are two types of assistant teachers, teaching associates and teaching assistants. Teaching assistants need to have a high school diploma and a 30-hour course in child development.

Vermont does not require salary parity for teachers in pre-K with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Vermont has a maximum class size of 20 for 3- and 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

**Learning time.** Programs in Act 62 are funded to operate 6-10 hours per week. Most programs operate about 3 hours per day, 6 to 10 hours per week, 3 to 4 days per week for at least 35 weeks per year. Grantees propose their EEI service delivery model systems. Most EEI programs are half-day, 8 to 11 hours per week, for 2 to 3 days per week. Act 166 are funded to operate 10 hours per week.

**Two adults in the classroom.** As previously noted, Vermont has a maximum class size of 20 for 3- and 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The newly revised Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) for birth through grade 3 were approved by the State Board of Education in August 2015. The VELS are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Common Core State Standards in English language arts and Mathematics, as well as Next Generation Science Standards. The VELS are much more extensive, covering children birth to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, then the previous standards that only covered pre-K.

The VELS Committee that has been leading the revision efforts have begun to discuss the implementation of the new VELS, including developing webinars for teachers and administrator on understanding the VELS, examples of how the VELS look in practice, and other professional development materials will be posted on the VELS website.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** There is no approved list of curriculum models, but the curricula must be aligned with the VELS. Act 166 also specifies that the curriculum must be secular. During the application process programs need to identify how they are going to meet VELS domains. Currently curricula programs chose or describe are tracked by ISL/AOE, but not monitored or evaluated. RTT-ELC is in the process of developing a curriculum monitoring system.

**Support for students with special needs.** Vermont's children eligible for IDEA, Part B, section 619 attend inclusive publicly funded prekindergarten education programs with typically developing peers. It was reported in the Part B APR (2012) that more than 73 percent of preschool children with disabilities participate in inclusive early learning and development programs with typically developing peers and only 4.81 percent of children 3-5 attend a separate special education class, separate schools, or residential facilities.

All pre-K programs are required to adhere to all applicable federal and state laws including, but not limited to, Part B of the Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. With respect to children receiving Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services who are enrolled in the prekindergarten education program, comply with all requirements of state and federal laws governing IDEA Part B and ECSE, including allowing access to ECSE service providers.

Under VT Special Education Rules, educational placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement decisions regarding resident children served under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be individually determined based on the child's abilities and needs as described in the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The LEA of the child's residence shall offer FAPE. Where services are provided, shall be provided at the discretion of the LEA in which the child resides. Parents may choose to accept or decline the provision of early childhood special education and related services as offered by the LEA.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** State policy does not regulate services for DLL/ELL students. The Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities recommend that, "Educators must respect and incorporate the rich diversity of families' languages and dialects into the educational environment as children make progress in speaking and understanding English."

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** All pre-K programs are required to participate in STARS and be higher than a level 3 or be NAEYC accredited. In order to be at a level 5, a program needs to have 15-17 points. In order to get 15 points, a programs need to have a 5.0 or higher on the ECERS. For 2015-2016, 54 percent of the 317 pre-K programs have five STARS.

CLASS is currently being phased in, after programs renew a STAR certificate twice using ECERS, it will need to begin to use CLASS. Supports for encouraging high-quality teaching are determined at the local level and the state's capacity to systemically support high-quality teaching is not strong.

**Child assessments.** Both EEI and Act 62 use TS GOLD. Act 166 will require all publicly funded prekindergarten programs to report on the progress of children on an annual basis. All children who are included in a district's school census as "PreK" or who are on an IEP and receive four or more hours of early childhood special education services per week must be assessed using the online TS GOLD child assessment.

In the past year, Vermont has been working on building state capacity and sustainability on how to implement TS GOLD with fidelity, interpret the data, and use results to inform practice and communicate with families.

ISL/AOE offers several different TS GOLD trainings. The first level of training is offered for free in ongoing rounds across the state. The second round of the next level of training just started for the pre-qualified Act 166 programs. A mentoring pilot project, funded through philanthropy, is exploring the ways to support TS GOLD use in pre-K classrooms. Funding for the Act 166 classrooms has been increased with the goal of giving teachers more time to complete the components of TS GOLD.



**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** All pre-K programs, including those operated by public schools, are required to attain at least 4 out of 5 stars in STARS or to hold NAEYC accreditation. An exception is made for programs that have 3 stars. These programs are allowed to operate if the provider has developed a plan to achieve 4 or 5 stars within 3 years and the plan is approved by the Secretaries of AOE and AHS. STARS require structured observations of classroom quality using ECERS. In 2015-2016, 30 programs had three STARS. If pre-K programs lose STARS, the state is notified by AHS.

Act 166 requires establishing a pre-K monitoring system which will be developed through RTT-ELC. Plans include building upon existing monitoring structures (e.g., STARS, licensing visits), pull data from our emerging comprehensive assessment system, and move towards a multi-tiered monitoring system. Information will be gathered through desk and on-site monitoring visits. The purpose of the new Vermont's monitoring system will be to provide feedback to programs for their continuous improvement.

Pre-K programs are required to submit financial reports to AOE, detailing costs for prekindergarten education on an annual basis. This information includes programmatic details, including number of children served, number in public and private programs, and the public financial investment made; the quality of the education programs and efforts to ensure continuous quality improvements through mentoring, training, and technical assistance; and the outcomes for children including school readiness and proficiency in numeracy and literacy.

A third-party independent evaluation of either EEI or Act 62 has not occurred.

**Professional development.** Teachers in Act 62 and public school EEI classrooms are required to have 9 credit hours per 7 years. EEI teachers in nonpublic setting are required to have 12 clock hours per year. In January 2014, Vermont's AEYC was approved by T.E.A.C.H. to implement T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. RTT-ELC funded a grant with Education Development Center, Inc. to provide expert assistant in the implementation of Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, and Helping (M.A.T.C.H. project). The implementation is still in the beginning stages.

There are several different coaching programs that are being implemented. As mentioned earlier, one is working on TS GOLD implementation and support and another one, funded by philanthropy, is working on providing licensed mentors to 25 provisionally licensed pre-K teachers.

These various efforts are not coordinated by ISL/AOE and there is not a system in place to monitor or report the number of programs that are participating in coaching or mentoring efforts or the intensity of the coaching. ISL/AOE is working on a licensing registry and working with AHS to allow mentoring as credit for PD.

The increase in per child funds in pre-K are intended to support TS GOLD observation and reporting as well as teacher planning time. This is an expectation, not a requirement. STARS gives credit for allowing teachers time to plan.

**Integrated system.** The Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan serve as the foundation for all early childhood efforts in Vermont. In 2013, Gov. Shumlin had an Early Childhood Summit and created a partnership with the Governor's Office, AHS, and AOE that formed a workgroup and created the Framework. The Action Plan was created in 2014 to chart out the action steps. The process allowed people to have a voice, however silos still exist which will challenge the plans implementation.

All of the state funded pre-K are required to participate in STARS. All of the pre-K system components are included

in STARS: VELs, the use of TS GOLD, ECERS and CLASS, and teacher licensing. However, supports to implement these various components are not fully developed.

RTT-ELC has been supporting the integration of the professional development system, program and child assessment, and data collection. The early standards were recently finalized but plans are to incorporate them into the early childhood system with more targeted professional development. Curriculum that is chosen by the pre-K classrooms is expected to be aligned with the VELs, but currently there is not a verification process to ensure this occurs.

In November 2014, Building Bright Futures (SAC) launched Vermont Insights, a web platform for the collection and integration of early childhood data systems. Vermont Insights intends to acquire, connect, and compile data across the early childhood system to inform essential policy questions. With the implementation of Act 166, plans are underway to share prequalified pre-K data between the AOE and AHS. In addition, all children who participate in Act 166 pre-K will have a statewide AOE unique identifier.

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## Resources

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

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2600 Prekindergarten Education rules that take effect July 1, 2016



## Virginia

### Preschool Initiative

The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) began in 1995, serving at-risk 4-year-olds who were not enrolled in existing preschool programs. Eighty-eight percent of school districts operate VPI classrooms. In the 2014-2015 school year, VPI served 18,250 four-year-olds, the fourth consecutive year for a one percentage-point increase in enrollment according to NIEER's *State of Preschool Yearbook*.

State funding for VPI rose for the third consecutive year. In 2014-2015, preschool spending was \$68.3 million obtained from the state lottery revenues. Funding allocations to local school divisions are based on the number of students eligible for free lunch, but criteria for student eligibility are also based on locally determined risk factors. In the 2015-2016 school year, new eligibility criteria will be mandated by the General Assembly. This will include children who are 200 percent or below poverty level.

In December 2014, Virginia won a federal Preschool Expansion Grant of \$17.5 million per year for four years.

Virginia's Preschool program earned 6 of the 10 NIEER quality standards benchmarks in the 2014-2015 school year. The state does not require lead teachers to have a Bachelor's degree or assistant teachers to have CDAs. The preschool program does not require meals be provided. Site visits are not required, but local plans are reviewed twice a year.

Virginia ranked 23 nationally for current spending per child on K-12 education in 2013. Virginia scored above the national average in both math and reading in grades 4 and 8 on the *NAEP National Report Card*. The state has an above average graduation rate at 84.5 percent of its students. Virginia teacher's union ranked 47<sup>th</sup> overall for union power and influence, or "weakest" in a 2012 Fordham University study. The state does not require districts to offer a full-day kindergarten program. Virginia had 77 percent enrollment in kindergarten and 75.5 percent of those enrolled attended full day in 2013.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). VPI meets **four** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **seven** other elements. Virginia possible meets the requirement for BA and salary parity, however it is not a required policy to do so. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

## Virginia Preschool Initiative

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	○	–	●	○	●	●	–	○	○	ND	○	○	○	–

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Governor Terry McAuliffe (D) has been a proponent of preschool and early education. The Governor has released publications promoting the benefits of a strong high-quality early childhood program, especially for children in low- and moderate-income households. In 2014, the Governor created both the Children’s Cabinet and the Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success. The Children’s Cabinet is focused on the education, health, safety, and welfare of Virginia’s children and youth. The Cabinet is co-chaired by Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel and Secretary of Education Ann Holton. As part of the Cabinet, the Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success was also created. The council is chaired by Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam, and focuses on improving the health, wellbeing, and education of young children. In 2015, the Council submitted a report and set of policy recommendations to the Governor and Children’s Cabinet including policy strategies for policymakers to consider that affect outcomes for young children. Funding has increased modestly year to year in recent years, with small increases in enrollment, but small declines in real spending per child.

State businesses and advocates are also actively involved in improving early childhood services. The Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education (VAECE) works with the Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success to improve professional development of those working with young children and to advocate for children’s issues in public policy. The VAECE also works with Elevate Early Education, an organization created by Virginia business, civil, and philanthropic leaders to challenge policymakers to include early childhood in their agendas. Voices for Virginia’s Children focuses on advocating for children’s policies.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Lottery funds are disbursed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to schools and community-based organizations. The Office of Humanities and Early Childhood (Dr. Christine Harris, Director) within the Division of Instruction of VDOE provides leadership, coordination, technical assistance support to VPI as well as English, history, social science, fine arts, foreign language elementary and secondary programs. The office is staffed with 17 employees, however only four directly support preschool efforts.

The University of Virginia has supported VDOE in the past, but has not conducted an evaluation of the preschool program since 2011.

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Virginia does not require lead teachers to have a BA, but does require lead teachers to obtain specialized training in early childhood. The vast majority of preschool teachers are in public schools and, despite lack of a requirement, most teachers have a BA. Preschool teachers in public schools are required to be paid on the same salary schedule as K-3 teachers as mandated by state policy. Judging this element is particularly difficult for Virginia as nearly all teachers at present are likely to have a BA degree and pay parity even though these are reported by the state as not required by policy.

**Adult-child ratios.** Virginia has a maximum class size of 18 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:9. These numbers meet the Essential Element limit of 22 children per class and are within the adult-to-child ratio ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** The Preschool Initiative operates 3 to 5.5 hours per day, 5 days per week. Localities may choose to offer part-day programs for 3 hours per day or school-day programs for 5.5 hours per day, though nearly all programs operate on a full school-day schedule.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Virginia's pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 18 children per classroom with a ratio of 1 adult for every 9 children.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The [Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds](#) were first developed in 2004 and last revised in 2013. They provide early childhood educators a set of minimum standards with indicators of success for entering kindergarten. The standards are aligned with Virginia's Kindergarten Standards of Learning and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Curriculum choice is a local decision, but curricula should align with Virginia's early learning standards. The [Virginia Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool](#) was designed to assist localities in identifying and choosing curricula that are based on scientific research and align with early learning standards.

**Support for students with special needs.** Virginia actively promotes inclusive settings for children, however the number of children enrolled in VPI who receive special education services is unknown. Early childhood special education services are provided by a local school division's special education departments.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** According to the US Census, 14.9 percent of people age 5 years and older in Virginia speak a language other than English at home. State policy in Virginia does not address preschool services for English language learners. Virginia has made some efforts to address the K-12 ELL population and in 2014, school divisions allocated less than \$10,000 in Title III funding were invited by VDOE to participate in a statewide consortium to pool together financial and programmatic resources in order to serve the needs of these students. The VDOE's Early Childhood [website](#) page provides links to resources to support teachers of young English language learners and the ELDS are aligned with WIDA's ELD Standards framework for K-12.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** ECERS or CLASS scores were not available for review.

**Child assessments.** Localities are required to use the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening instruments (PALS-PreK) in the fall and spring of each school year for preschool students. These child assessments are intended to be used to guide teacher training or professional development, make adjustments to curricula, track child- and program-level outcomes over time, and to individualize instruction and supports for each child. However, this is an extraordinarily narrow measure of learning and development that leaves out almost all of what is covered by the state's standards.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Virginia documents program-level outcomes by reviewing local plans twice a year. The results of this review are used to identify needs to guide teacher training or professional development, identify programs for corrective actions or sanctions, make adjustments to curricula, provide program staff with technical assistance and/or mentoring, measure the program on a QRIS, and provide feedback to parents.

Data from monitoring are used for the following purposes: to identify needs that will guide teacher training and professional development, to identify programs for corrective action or sanctions, to make funding decisions about programs or grantees, to make adjustments to curricula, and to provide program staff with technical assistance and/or mentoring. Program monitoring by state education staff and consultants was conducted through biennial site visits, prior to 2011-2012, to review program facilities, on-site safety procedures, and program record checks. Site visits were eliminated due to budget constraints in 2011-2012. Desk monitoring of local plans and results of child assessments continue as methods to conduct an annual review of program-level outcomes.

VPI was last evaluated in 2011 by the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, as reported in [The Differential Effects of Preschool: Evidence From Virginia](#). This evaluation was not mandated by the state. The study, the first peer reviewed analysis of the effectiveness of the program, showed improved performances in kindergarten and first grade comparing students who did not attend any form of preschool. The last state-mandated evaluation in 2007 from the [Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission](#) found that VPI students gained in literacy skills during the pre-K year and outperformed other kindergarteners.

**Professional development.** All lead teachers working in public schools must meet the state requirement of 15 clock hours of in-service professional development per year. The monitoring policies in Virginia allow results of child-level assessments to help identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development. Over 20 state agencies and organizations collaborate through the [Virginia Cross-Sector Professional Development Team](#) to create a unified professional development system to promote planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of early childhood professional development.

**Integrated system.** The state currently links some ECE to K-12. The PALS screening for preschoolers is managed by the University of Virginia. VPI and the preschool special education (IDEA, Part B, 619) databases are linked to the K-12 data system to track progress. Additionally, the state's QRIS program is a partnership between the Office of Early Childhood Development and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

[Virginia Preschool Initiative Guidelines](#)

[Virginia's Quality Indicators For Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment](#)

[Early Childhood, Virginia Department of Education website](#)





## Washington

### Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

Washington's pre-kindergarten program, ECEAP, began in 1985. The program includes preschool education, family support, and health and nutrition services. ECEAP is administered by the state Department of Early Learning (DEL), and serves, 3- and 4-year-olds with a priority on 4-year-olds in families with household incomes up to 110 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL). Up to 10 percent of the program slots may be used for families who are not income-eligible, but are affected by other developmental or environmental risk factors. Children who are in foster care, receiving Child Protective Services, or who qualify for special education are eligible.

In 2010, the Legislature passed House Bill 2731 establishing ECEAP as a statutory entitlement for all eligible children in school year 2018-2019. During the 2015 legislative session, the effective date of the entitlement was moved to the 2020-2021 school year. Since 2010, the Legislature has added 3,667 slots for ECEAP children for a total of 11,691 current slots. An additional 10,631 slots will be needed by fall 2020, according to the November 2015 extended forecast provided by the state Caseload Forecast Council.

In 2015-2016, DEL is contracting with 57 local entities to operate ECEAP programs in 36 of Washington's 39 counties. Head Start is available in the remaining counties. Contractors may be public or private organizations and currently include school districts, educational service districts, consortia of family child care providers, child care centers, community and technical colleges, local governments, and nonprofit organizations.

ECEAP meets 9 of 10 of the NIEER Quality Standards Checklist, falling short of meeting the teacher degree requirement of a BA. ECEAP requires lead teachers to have an AA or higher with the equivalent of 30 credits in early childhood education or have a valid state teaching certificate with an endorsement in ECE or EC Special Education.

Washington's \$60M Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant was announced in December 2011. Washington's application focused on building a cohesive and comprehensive early learning system, including Washington's kindergarten-entry system: the Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS), Early Achievers (Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System), professional development for early care providers and educators, and data and IT systems to support and inform the system.

In K-12 education, Washington ranked 29<sup>th</sup> for education spending, at \$9,672 per pupil in 2013. Washington reports a graduation rate below the national average, at 76.4 percent, and 2015 NAEP test scores were above the national average in math and reading at both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions and Washington was 10th overall for union power and influence out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, or "strongest," which was the first of five tiers.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 74.7 percent of age-eligible children in Washington were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013 with 65.2 percent of those attending full-day programs.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Rigorous Program Policies, and Strong Program Practices—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). ECEAP meets **eight** of the Essential Elements and partially meets **three** elements. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	●	–	●	●	●	○	–	ND	●	○	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment:

**Political will.** Legislation passed in the Washington State Legislature in 2010 ([House Bill 2731](#)) outlined the legislative intent to establish state Pre-K as an entitlement program. The Early Start Act showed continued clear bipartisan legislative support for early learning in Washington. Governor Jay Inslee (D) proposed the largest early learning funding increase in state history, including a substantial increase in ECEAP, though the final 2015-2017 budget contained only a minor expansion of the program.

Washington enjoys early learning champions on both sides of the aisle in the state legislature. State Representative Ruth Kagi is considered the matriarch of the work, with a longstanding record of supporting early learning issues. She has served as a leader within the legislature to help educate other members by bringing early learning experts and research to share with her colleagues. Representative Kagi is joined by many others, including Representative Maureen Walsh, Senator Steve Litzow, and Senator Andy Billig.

Washington’s largest city, Seattle, created the [Seattle Preschool Program](#), which was passed by voters in 2014, and is being funded through a property tax. Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) was championed by Seattle City Council President, Tim Burgess, and lauded by Mayor Ed Murray: “There is nothing more morally important that I will do as Mayor in the next four years than creating a high-quality preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds in Seattle.” SPP enrolled its first cohort of 200 children in September 2015, with a diverse set of contractors including community-based organizations and the Seattle School District. SPP is well aligned with the Essential Elements—offering full-day programs and requiring teachers with BAs. The four-year implementation goal is to serve 2,000 children in 100 classrooms by 2018, before returning to voters for reauthorization. SPP funding included an initial evaluation of the program, which will be conducted through a collaboration among Third Sector Intelligence (3SI); the University of Washington; the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER); and Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA).

In early 2015, King County Executive Dow Constantine proposed a levy to fund [Best Starts for Kids](#), which would dedicate 50% of levy revenue to programs serving children from birth to five. Voters endorsed Best Starts in the

November 2015 election, thus approving a six-year, \$65M property tax. The Best Starts funding focused on early childhood will be directed toward prenatal, newborn, and early childhood support through home visiting programs and other evidence-based approaches.

Across Washington, the Early Learning Action Alliance (ELAA) is a coordinated and organized statewide coalition focused on advocating for state policies and investments in early learning. Founded in 2008 and led by Children's Alliance, ELAA has been instrumental in defending early learning programs during the recession, and in the recent advancements, as Washington's economy has recovered. The coalition comprises over 50 organizations, sets an annual legislative agenda, and establishes legislative, communication, and mobilization strategies for early learning to be widely organized and used across the state. Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer, the Children's Alliance Early Learning Policy Director, leads this advocacy work.

Washington's early learning ecosystem has benefited significantly from investments by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has funded an early learning program and advocacy portfolio in Washington for the past 10 years. Gates Foundation investments have seeded program work to further high quality pre-K, including developing an Educare School in South King County, and a network of PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> investments in school districts and regional educational service districts across the state. The foundation has also invested heavily in WaKIDS (the kindergarten entry process) and Early Achievers, Washington's QRIS, as well as data and infrastructure at the state Department of Early Learning. Gates has also been a major funder of advocacy organizations, including Children's Alliance, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Ready Nation, and Moms Rising. Gates' long-term investment in developing and implementing Washington's public/private EL intermediary, Thrive Washington, has served as important signature investment highlighting the foundation's commitment to early learning in Washington. As of 2015, Gates has reduced its comprehensive investments in early learning across the state, but will focus support on Seattle Preschool and ECEAP as it builds toward a national strategy focused on pre-K exemplars and the EL workforce.

Other foundation leaders in Washington include the Boeing Company and the Bezos Family Foundation. Boeing's investments include support for school districts and their early learning partners, particularly focused on math. Bezos has funded parent engagement programs including VROOM, as well as Reach Out and Read, and Thrive Washington.

**Strong leadership.** From 2009 through 2015, Washington's DEL was led by Dr. Bette Hyde, who came to DEL following years as superintendent of the Bremerton School District, where she pioneered a strong role for K-12 in early learning. Dr. Hyde recently retired, and DEL's new leader, as of October 2015, is Ross Hunter. Formerly elected to serve in the House of Representatives, Hunter served as the powerful chair of the House Appropriations Committee.

The state's public-private partnership, Thrive Washington, is led by Sam Whiting, who became President/CEO in 2013, after more than two decades in nonprofit leadership and education philanthropy.

Washington's State Superintendent of Public Instruction for K-12, Randy Dorn, has used his elected position to promote the importance of early learning in preparing students for success as they transition into, and progress through, the K-12 system. In local communities, Early Learning has achieved prominence often through the efforts of K-12 superintendents including Dr. Greg Baker in Bellingham and Dr. Susan Enfield in Highline.

Washington also benefits from the University of Washington's multiple approaches to building early learning leaders and disseminating high quality programs and practices. The College of Education at UW been home to one of the Head Start Centers—the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL)—led by Dr. Gail Joseph. Joseph also leads the Center of Quality Early Learning (CQEL) which partners closely with the Department of Early Learning to build capacity of early learning practitioners across the state, through Early Achievers quality ratings,

including the environmental rating scales and CLASS. The National P-3 Center is also housed in the College of Education. Led by Dr. Kristie Kauerz, the P-3 Center co-enrolls pre-K site directors and other early learning program managers with elementary school principals for a year-long, credit-bearing course of study. The UW is also the home to the Institute for Learning and Brain Science (I-LABS), a leader in early childhood brain research. Dr. Patricia Kuhl and Dr. Andy Meltzoff lead the institute and frequently present on and inform local and state policymakers of the most recent research.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** ECEAP requires lead teachers to have an AA or higher with the equivalent of 30 credits in early childhood education or have a valid state teaching certificate with an endorsement in ECE or EC Special Education. ECEAP teachers do not earn compensation at the same level as K-3 teachers. ECEAP lead teacher salaries vary based on degree, geographic location, and organization.

**Adult-child ratios.** ECEAP requires a lead teacher and assistant teacher if the classroom has more than 10 students. Maximum class size is 20 children. A lead teacher must be present at all times, and a lead or assistant teacher must also be present any time more than 10 children are present.

**Learning time.** ECEAP programs are primarily part-day (averaging 3.2 hours). Part-day programs require 320 classroom hours per year and average 397 hours. In the 2014-2015 school year, the full- and extended-day models were added. The Full School Day model follows the school calendar year, operates 5.5-6.5 hours per day for a minimum of four days a week and a minimum 1,000 hours of direct instruction. The Extended Day model provides at least 10 hours per day, 5 days per week, and operates all year.

**Proven curriculum.** In 2014-2015, 86 percent of ECEAP sites used Creative Curriculum. Many ECEAP sites layer their core curricula with additional language, literacy and math curricula. Although preschool programs are widely using developmentally appropriate curricula, training and implementation on the use of curricula varies and many teachers may not have access to the most recent version of an evidence-based curriculum that addresses all domains of development.

Through a 2014 three-year grant from the Gates Foundation, DEL is working toward integrating a limited selection of the latest versions of curriculum. DEL has determined that Creative Curriculum, Fifth Edition and HighScope will be the foundational curricula for ECEAP, with rollout beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. DEL held several Preschool Operational Work Groups over the 2014-2015 school year, during which stakeholders and contractors gave input on implementing curricula, and prioritized the resources needed. In 2015-2016, 25 out of the 26 full- and extended-day expansion contractors will implement the latest version of Creative Curriculum. One contractor is implementing Tools of the Mind, one contractor is implementing both Creative Curriculum and HighScope. Over the next three years, all ECEAP sites will be supplied with the latest versions of the curricula and training on curricula approaches.

**Support for students with special needs.** Children who are in foster care, homeless, or in families receiving Child Protective Services are eligible for ECEAP and given highest priority for available slots regardless of age or income. Children with developmental delays or disabilities are eligible for ECEAP and are not counted in the over-income limits; they receive priority points during the enrollment process. In addition, up to 10 percent of ECEAP children can be from families who are above the income limits and affected by developmental or environmental risks, such as developmental delays or disabilities, family violence, chemical dependency, or incarcerated parents. Each risk factor is associated with priority points during the enrollment process.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** ECEAP performance standards require programs to “Ensure a culturally appropriate curriculum that...supports ongoing development of each child’s home language while helping each children learn English.” ECEAP providers are required to complete the Home Language Survey on all children, and, as appropriate, assess the child’s language acquisition as part of the TS GOLD assessment. There are no state policies or practices that provide specific supports for dual language learners.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS or ECERS scores were not able to be reviewed.

**Formative assessments.** ECEAP children are assessed three times/year in Part Day and Full School Day classes, and four/times per year in Extended Day classes, using Teaching Strategies GOLD. Though ECEAP has had an assessment process throughout its history, and voluntary use of TS GOLD was widespread for many years, it did not become mandatory until fall 2013. Teaching Strategies GOLD is also used as part of the WaKIDS process as children enter kindergarten. ECEAP performance standards also require that contractors complete developmental screenings on children within 90 days of enrollment (Head Start requirement is within 45 days of enrollment).

**Data-driven decision making and independent evaluation.** Early Achievers (Washington’s QRIS) is used to assess the quality of pre-K sites. As Early Achievers has rolled out over the last few years, participation has been voluntary. With the expansion of ECEAP in 2014 and the passage of the Early Start Act in 2015, new requirements are now in place for ECEAP programs’ participation in Early Achievers. Sites operating ECEAP prior to July 1, 2015 must rate a 4 or 5 by April 15, 2016. This includes current ECEAP sites which have not participated in Early Achievers, or which have maintained a level 3 based on early participation in an ECEAP/Head Start Early Achievers pilot. All new 2015-2016 ECEAP sites must rate a 4 or 5 within 12 months of enrollment if they are not licensed childcare, or within 18 months if in licensed childcare.

UW CQEL staff provide training in the Early Achievers tools relevant to pre-K including the Environment Rating Scale, Classroom Assessment Scoring System, the Early Achievers Coach Framework and evidence based curriculum. CQEL staff will also provide on-going support to DEL Preschool Specialists to conduct curriculum fidelity checks. Assessments are classroom-based and designed to help teachers and administrators improve outcomes for children.

The legislature commissioned a study of ECEAP’s outcomes in 2013. The retrospective evaluation, released in December 2014, found that “ECEAP has a positive impact on third, fourth, and fifth grade test scores. ECEAP’s impact on test scores is twice as large as the average effect we found when we reviewed research on early childhood programs in other states.”

**Professional development.** ECEAP requires 15 professional development hours per year for lead teachers and family support staff. ECEAP contractors must have a training plan for staff.

Since 2012, Washington has been implementing practice-based coaching as the framework for providing early childhood teachers with support as they implement quality improvement plans as part of Early Achievers (QRIS). Early Achievers coaches are employed by regional organizations and trained and supported by the University of Washington’s Childcare Quality and Early Learning Center for Research and Professional Development (CQEL). CQEL

is the state's QRIS evaluation partner and also leads work to ensure that Washington's professional development system is based on practices that promote quality and school readiness outcomes.

Washington has invested in ensuring that the state's early learning programs are trained in, and implement, a common Early Achievers coach framework. Beginning in 2013, when participation in Early Achievers began to grow among preschool programs across the state (both state pre-K and Head Start), the University of Washington team at CQEL began to expand coaching training, supports, and resources to preschool coaches who support teachers in ECEAP programs. DEL believes that in partnering with the UW, high quality coaching by certified preschool coaches will result in higher ratings in Early Achievers, and higher quality instructional practices in the classrooms leading to increased rates of school readiness among preschool children.

**Integrated system.** In addition to monitoring general program compliance and quality, DEL pre-K Specialists consult with ECEAP coaches in the field and perform curriculum fidelity checks on the latest versions of Creative Curriculum. System supports include training for DEL pre-K Specialists and Preschool Coaches, on-site support to preschool programs to ensure fidelity is maintained in curriculum implementation, and support to the DEL pre-K specialist team who serve a statewide consultation role to all state preschool programs. DEL pre-K specialists, currently under the guidance of the Center for Quality Early Learning at the UW, have begun leading communities of practice groups focused on using data to guide continuous quality improvement, aligned with the Early Achievers standards in preschool programs.

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## Resources

[DEL website](#)





## West Virginia

### West Virginia Universal Preschool

West Virginia's preschool program was first established in 1983 for 3- and 4-year-olds. West Virginia passed legislation in 2002 requiring the state to expand access to preschool education programs available to all four-year-olds in the state by the 2012-2013 school year. West Virginia Universal Pre-K is available in all 55 counties. West Virginia requires that a minimum of half of the programs operate in collaborative settings with private prekindergarten, child care centers, or Head Start programs in order to facilitate expansion of the program. In 2014-15, 79 percent of the classrooms were in "community partners." The program served over 16,800 children with 69 percent of four-year-olds enrolled in state preschool and 25 percent in Head Start programs in 2013-2014. West Virginia also enrolls 11 percent of 3-year-olds. Full-day kindergarten is provided to 87 percent of students.

Funding for West Virginia Universal Pre-K is part of the State School Aid Funding Formula. As enrollment increases, funding to implement pre-K program also increases. FY 2015 Total State Aid funding generated by West Virginia Universal Pre-K was over \$91 million (in addition to about \$55 million in Federal Head Start and Childcare funding and a, perhaps undercounted, \$1.5 million in local funding). Financial support goes directly to public schools, which are permitted to pass funds to other agencies to offer services. The state spends about \$5,800 per child, and the total from all sources is about \$8,800 per child, while K-12 expenditure is around \$15,000 per child (this includes special education costs). As the P-12 population in West Virginia is projected to decline by 11 percent over the next decade (the only other states projected to lose 5 percent or more are Michigan and Maine), the state could enroll an entire additional grade level without putting much pressure on revenues. Schools have an incentive to do so in order to maintain enrollment, making it more likely that West Virginia will expand pre-K to serve children at age 3.

West Virginia's preschool program meets all ten of NIEER's Benchmarks for Quality and ranks among the top ten in access for both 3- and 4-year-olds. West Virginia did not apply for a federal expansion grant, possibly because finances are not a limiting factor for enrollment in West Virginia, but there are aspects of the program that might have been problematic (e.g., days per week).

In 2012-2013, West Virginia dedicated the smallest portion of its budget to K-12 education in the nation, 10.5 percent, spending \$11,132 per student. West Virginia's 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP scores are among the nation's worst. Reading scores (35 percent of students scoring at or above proficient) are significantly lower in only DC, Alaska, Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico. Math scores (24 percent of students scoring at or above proficient) are significantly lower in only DC, Louisiana, and Mississippi. West Virginia also has the lowest median household income of any state except Mississippi and ranks last in the percentage of the population with a 4-year college degree. In 2012, the Fordham Institute and Education Reform Now assessed the power and influence of state teacher unions in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. West Virginia ranked 13th overall for union power and influence, or "strong," which was in the second tier of five.

### Essential Elements

The Fifteen Essential Elements have been clustered in three categories- Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction (Minervino, 2014). West Virginia meets **nine** of the 15



Essential Elements and partially meets **three** more. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assess - ment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	●	–	●	●	○	●	●	–	●	●	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    NA Unable to determine

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

West Virginia benefits from a reasonably strong enabling environment formed by the collaborative work of elected officials, state agencies, and the early childhood community with some interest from philanthropy. The declining school-age population provides a pathway forward on funding that is unavailable to most other states and creates pressure within the public school community to expand pre-K within the school finance system rather than to view pre-K as competing for funds.

**Political will.** Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin (D) has supported early childhood since he took office in 2010. In 2013, he signed SB359 providing optional full day pre-K to all 4-year-olds and seeking for all children to read on grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Gov. Tomblin created the West Virginia Early Childhood Planning Task Force in 2013 to assist with the development of the early childhood program. This includes components, priorities, and costs of a quality early childhood system. The Governor vetoed SB19 in 2015 that would relax rules to allow 4 day a week programs. Most recently, Gov. Tomblin co-authored an op-ed in Forbes with Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley (R) on the value of providing quality early education. Lloyd Jackson II, Vice-President of the State Board of Education (term ends 2020) was lead sponsor of comprehensive early childhood legislation during his tenure as state Senate Education chairman and is also a Trustee of the Benedum Foundation. Republicans control both houses of the legislature. Some in the legislature have been fighting the Common Core, but the administration and State Chief remain supportive.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Gov. Tomblin created the West Virginia Early Childhood Planning Task Force to produce a development plan for early childhood, along with the West Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council. W. Clayton Burch has progressed from director of the state pre-K program to head of the Office of Early Learning (pre-K to fifth grade) to Chief Academic Officer for the Division of Teaching and Learning, Department of Education (DOE). The structure of DOE provides a relatively strong P-3 framework. The Office of Early Learning is housed within the Division of Teaching and Learning and has a highly knowledgeable and effective staff led by Monica DellaMea (Executive Director).

## Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** As of the fall of 2013, all new lead teachers in nonpublic settings are required to hold a minimum of a BA in early childhood or related field. In addition to the Bachelor's degree, teachers can also get EC Specialization certificates. It may take some time for all teachers in the system to reach a BA. At least one study found that collaborative agency teachers had lower salaries than those in the public schools, but it is unclear how much this is due to differences in qualifications rather than pay scale.

**Adult-child ratios.** West Virginia has maximum class sizes of 20 and a 1:10 ratio. These numbers are below Essential Element limits of 22 children per class and within adult-to-child ratios ranging from 2:15 to 2:22.

**Learning time.** Currently, preschool classrooms are required to operate only a minimum of 14 hours per week and offer no fewer than 128 instructional days per year. Most programs operate on a 4-day per week schedule. Plans were to begin requiring a minimum five-hour instructional day, five days per week for no fewer than 160 instructional days per year in the 2016-17 school year. However, the State Senate Education Committee passed a bill that would replace the five-day requirement with a mandate of at least "1,500 minutes of instruction per week, an amount that could, for example, equal five days of five hours of instruction or four days of about six-and-a-half hours."

**Two adults in the classroom.** Two adults, one of whom must be a classroom staff member, must be present at all times with children.

**Age appropriate learning standards.** The West Virginia Early Learning Standards are comprehensive and consistent with Head Start's learning standards to ensure seamless collaboration. The Early Learning Standards Framework has been developed to assist in the ELDS implementation. West Virginia Board of Education policy was recently revised to better align with next generation content standards (e.g., Common Core, as well as the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Standards Framework).

**System that ensures effective curriculum:** Programs are required to use an approved comprehensive curriculum. The curriculum adoption cycle for approved pre-K curricular frameworks was last completed in 2011, and is slated for completion again in 2019. As a result of this adoption, three frameworks are approved from which county collaborative early childhood teams choose: The Creative Curriculum, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., HighScope, and High Reach. No evidence was obtained regarding the extent to which supports are provided for adequate implementation of these curricula.

**Support for students with special needs.** In 2013-2014, over 15 percent of the children enrolled in pre-K received special education services. Required supports include special education teachers, specialists, inclusive classrooms and Part C to B to Kindergarten transitions. Regulations stipulate the maximum number of students with disabilities per session and the provision of additional support staff is determined based on student needs and the IEP. Both special education and early learning operate under the Division of Teaching and Learning.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** West Virginia provides many supports for Dual Language Learners (DLLs). Monolingual non-English classes and dual immersion classes are permitted and children may be pulled out for English language instruction. Bilingual staff and translators are available when children do not speak English and information about the program, recruitment, outreach, and child progress is provided to families in their home language.

Teachers receive professional development around supporting DLLs and the state monitors the quality of bilingual instruction. DLL teachers are required to hold an ESL endorsement. At the beginning of the year, a home language survey is sent home and written plans must be in place on how to work with individual DLLs. The Early Learning Standards Framework contains standards for foreign language acquisition, cultural awareness, and the integration of the child's home language into the classroom.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** The state's policies mandate developmentally appropriate approaches to learning and teaching in substantial detail regarding both desired practice and strongly prohibited practices (e.g., worksheets, extended seat time, etc.). Extensive data are collected on ECERS and CLASS for all pre-K classrooms. Programs are evaluated using the ECERS-R once every three years. A recent study of 172 preschool classrooms in 39 of the 55 counties found higher ECERS-R scores in collaborative (participating in UPK) pre-K programs than in those not collaborating with public pre-K. Average total score in the participating classrooms was 4.59 and the largest advantages were for Activities (4.59 collaborative v. 3.64 non collaborative) and Space and Furnishings (4.58 v. 3.76). Collaborating private provider classrooms had an average Language and Reasoning score of 5.13.

**Child assessments.** Classroom based assessments are part of a continuous improvement system. The formative assessment process is a foundational component of all early learning classrooms in West Virginia. Pre-K educators utilize the formative assessment process on a daily basis to guide instruction, personalize learning, and articulate individual children's developmental progress to families. Three times per year, pre-K educators enter child outcome data on the West Virginia Early Learning Reporting System: Pre-K which includes data based on the Early Learning Scale, WV Early Learning Standards, child health information, and Special Education progress monitoring. DOE provides guidance on the use of formative assessment processes to guide instruction in early childhood educational programs.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** West Virginia uses data at the Child, Program, and Community/State levels to improve outcomes for children. The state produces the West Virginia School Readiness Profile to provide county collaborative early childhood teams with data to inform decision-making and create school readiness goals at the local level. The profile integrates data from DOE, Department of Health and Human Resources, and Head Start Programs. The data are pulled and Profiles are created from a variety of sources to provide the state and county collaboratives with programmatic and child information, and the information is used to track child and program outcomes over time, guide teacher professional development and coaching, make adjustments to curricula, and measure kindergarten readiness.

The West Virginia Universal Pre-K program has been assessed for both process quality (in 2009 and 2012) and program impact/child outcomes in 2005. The state began an independent evaluation in fall of 2015 that encompasses both a regression discontinuity design study and a longitudinal follow-up through grade three. As previously mentioned, all classrooms receive structured quality observations once every three years using the ECERS.

**Professional development.** Requires 15 clock hours per year for adequate professional development. The West Virginia Pre-K Early Learning Standards (WVELS) Professional Development System is designed for all educators, administrators and families to support effective implementation of the WVELS and includes 12 modules for pre-K educators. Each local county collaborative applies to the state for funding to deliver the training and establishes a leadership team to include educators, administrators, and families to ensure appropriate adaptation for local

stakeholders. WV also offers [Early Childhood E-Learning](#) options for pre-K and Kindergarten teachers and assistants that are aligned with teacher credentialing requirements.

West Virginia does not have a state system for coordinating teacher coaching, all efforts are coordinated and offered at the local level.

**Integrated systems.** West Virginia has an unusual degree of collaboration across education, child care and Head Start in the provision of state pre-K. This has required alignment of program standards, learning standards, and assessment. The West Virginia Early Learning Reporting System is a formative assessment initiative that supports pre-K educators, families of pre-K children, pre-K administrators, and kindergarten educators in guiding the processes associated with authentic assessment. Pre-K and kindergarten children's information is used to inform class instruction and personalize learning.

### **Key Contacts**

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### **Resources**

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## Wisconsin

### Wisconsin Four Year Old Kindergarten Program

Wisconsin's Constitution has included a promise to provide free, voluntary education for 4-year-olds since it became a state in 1848. Districts are not required to offer 4K, but if they do, it must be open to all age-eligible children. Funds for 4K are paid to public schools, which then may subcontract with private child-care centers, community-based programs, or Head Start agencies. Most programs operate part-day, 4-5 days per week, but some operate full-day 2-3 days per week. Funding for 4K is part of the overall school funding formula, at 0.5 of funding for other grade levels. Districts receive 0.6 if they offer 87.5 hours of parent outreach.

The Wisconsin Head Start program is a separate state-funded program offering supplemental state finances to federal Head Start grantees to provide comprehensive early childhood education for 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities or from low-income families. Participating programs follow the federal Head Start Performance Standards, and children meet Head Start enrollment guidelines. Reductions in state supplemental funding have led to fewer spaces, however. Efforts have been made to bring together Head Start technical assistance and training with other professional development efforts at both the state and local levels. This report does not review the Head Start Supplement program in the Essential Elements.

In 2014-2015, Wisconsin served 48,732 children, a total of 64 percent of the state's 4-year-olds in 4K (63 percent) and WI Head Start (1 percent). Total state funding was \$185 million, with a per child amount of \$3,802 in 2014-2015.

The program (4K) meets 5 NIEER benchmarks, missing on assistant teacher credentials, screenings and referrals, and meals. Ratios and class sizes are determined locally, so the program does not meet those benchmarks.

Wisconsin is a recipient of Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) funds, and many of the tasks supported by the grant involve 4K, including alignment with their QRIS and Longitudinal Data System (LDS). The department is also revising the 4K policy bulletin.

In K-12 education, Wisconsin ranks slightly below the US average for education spending, at \$11,071 per pupil in 2013, and scores slightly above national averages on math and reading scores at 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with a strong 88 percent graduation rate, higher than the US average. Wisconsin's public education expenditures per pupil are about the same as in Michigan and Minnesota, but lower than in Illinois, according to [Ballotpedia](#). According to [EdExcellence](#), Wisconsin is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the country for strength of teacher union, or strong.

The 2015 edition of Education Week's Quality Counts [report](#), *Preparing to Launch: Early Childhood's Academic Countdown* reports 80.6 percent of age-eligible children in Wisconsin were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2013; of those, 77 percent were attending full-day programs.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014).

Wisconsin’s 4K program meets **two** of the 15 Essential Elements, and partially meets **seven** elements. In Wisconsin, many of the elements are decisions made at the local level and therefore may meet the criteria if not reviewed at the state level. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Program Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
○	○	○	–	–	–	●	–	●	○	ND	–	○	○	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Wisconsin 4K has been around many years, and now about 96 percent of the districts offer programs. In the last two budget cycles, there has been nobody (including Governor Scott Walker (R)) who has opposed it, although in the previous three to four sessions there had always been some Republican resistance. There is strong support for the concept of quality rating as it applies to child care, but scale up around quality is not discussed very much beyond the QRIS. In a current debate in Wisconsin, there is a growing interest in voucher and charter school efforts. In the Head Start State Supplement program, almost the opposite is happening. The focus is not on increasing the amount of money, but on getting programs closer to parity with Head Start costs per child. Therefore, the amount of money stayed the same, but the number of children participating was reduced.

Wisconsin has a fairly interested and involved business sector, probably a dozen or more people who, if called upon to do advocacy, would do it. The Partnership for Wisconsin’s Economic Success was more engaged when there was intensive national effort. There is a small public-private initiative going through RTT-ELC. At the local level, there are a significant number of philanthropic and business groups working with local agencies around early childhood, United Way is one example.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Office of Early Learning (OEL) housed within Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is charged with coordinating the statewide early childhood system. The OEL is housed in the Content and Learning Team on the Division for Academic Excellence but works collaboratively across DPI divisions and other state departments to bring continuity and cohesiveness to the programs associated with early learning. The OEL provides leadership, partnership, policy development, incentives, and technical assistance to the early childhood community for children birth to age eight throughout Wisconsin. OEL has two employees, Jill Haglund and Jennie Mauer (Head Start State Collaborative Office Director). There is a lot of inter- and intra-agency collaboration, and many are supportive of early childhood. The agency partners heavily with counterparts in the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and with the universities, to move policy forward.

The Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council, as the result of a 5-year process, is looking at making some specific recommendations to the Governor. Their focus right now is on QRIS, getting more programs into higher level tiers, and increasing access to home visiting.



In DPI, there is an elected state Superintendent. The Governor and some in the legislature are trying to eliminate it as an elected position.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** A BA with early childhood teacher license is required for teachers. Wisconsin is a strong local control state, and pre-K is 4-year-old Kindergarten. Therefore, money flows to school districts and they can contract with child care, Head Start, or private programs. If they do, they pay the costs for the teachers—parity only occurs if the district requires it, which is rare, and up to the contracted agency. However, it appears that pay parity essentially is required and achieved (or nearly so) within the 4K program.

**Adult-child ratios.** These are locally determined and therefore do not meet the standard.

**Learning time.** Hours are determined locally, within the academic year. Districts must provide a minimum of 437 hours of direct instruction per year, or 349.5 hours of instruction plus 87.5 hours of parent outreach. Most programs are part-day, 4-5 days per week for an academic year, but some districts may offer the program full-day for 2-3 days per week. This does not meet the standard.

**Two adults in the classroom.** This is locally determined, so does not meet the standard.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) were last revised in 2013, and are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Literacy learning standards were revised in 2013.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** In this locally controlled state, they do have model early learning standards. In the training around standards the state encourages programs to consider how to use them to determine curriculum; and provides best practice guidance around any curriculum, but the state does not dictate or even suggest any curriculum.

**Support for students with special needs.** Through the IDEA part B requirement for Least Restrictive Environment, 96 percent of school districts have 4K now, and it has changed the face of inclusion for the better in the state. Many students with special needs, therefore, are served in 4K programs in or associated with public schools.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** There's little in state policy regarding support for dual language learners; related to practice, the agency has a project going through RTT-ELC, in which they are training a cadre of specialists around the state to understand and support DLL best practices. Many are connected to school district personnel who specialize in DLL for older children. According to the [US Census Bureau](#), 8.6 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** There are no recent statewide CLASS or ECERS observation data so it is unknown if this element was met.

**Child assessments.** The state started literacy screening with PALS-Pre-K in 2013-2014. The state legislature has changed the requirement and in 2016-2017 districts will still be required to do literacy screening but they will select their own screening tool. The state does not require other assessment at 4K, so districts determine their own assessment process. TS GOLD and Ages and Stages are often used. Common applications of the assessment information are to identify needs that will guide teacher training or professional development, make adjustments to curricula, and track child- and program-level outcomes over time.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Survey data and quotes of families as well as video clips [report](#) on the DPI website some of the impact the 4K program has had on children, families, programs. When and how the data were collected is not clear.

Stand alone 4K programs located in public schools, with no wrap-around child care, are not allowed to participate in Wisconsin's QRIS, YoungStar. Child care/4K collaborations may participate in YoungStar if at least one hour of child care service is provided per day beyond the 4K service delivery timeframe. If the program accepts Wisconsin Shares (CCDF) subsidies, it must participate in YoungStar.

The 4K program was last evaluated for both process quality and program impact/child outcomes during the 2003-2004 year, but the University of Wisconsin Madison is currently involved in a national study exploring 4K. Some outcomes from earlier studies are reported [here](#).

**Professional development.** There are very strong collaborations around PD among people who are coordinators of different efforts. RTT is leading to some strong coaching and mentoring going on in the child care world, although it is not clear how those efforts will continue when RTT-ELC grant funding is finished. In licensing, mentoring and peer review are built into the first three years of all licensing.

Wisconsin has a 'train the trainer' model for professional development and also a parent training module. A [module](#) exists for districts to align WMELS with the literacy standards in common core. Teachers also have the option of using a performance-based system that includes writing professional development plans, working with a mentor, and having a team review and approval.

**Integrated system.** There is an existing concept of a coherent system. The WMELS, for example, were a cross-department effort, so they were designed for birth through first grade. There are active collaborations between child care and schools, tied to the CCSS, and to the QRIS. So, the state has provisions and elements of an integrated system, but support to actually make the system operational limited.

As a recipient of RTT-ELC, Wisconsin is considering 4K alignment with their QRIS and LDS. It seems they are at the beginning of a process of data-driven improvement, although they are engaged in external evaluation as well.

Between the three departments: DCF, DHS, and DPI, a lot of data about Wisconsin children is collected. But it has been cumbersome to link data across programs and agencies, making it hard to use data to connect the dots about how we are serving our kids and what their outcomes are in the long run. The state is exploring options for developing an LDS and the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) approved the department's proposed data collection system as mandated and funded in the current state budget.

## Key Contacts

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## **Resources**

Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). [The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook](#). New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Wisconsin



## Denver

### Denver Preschool Program

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) began during the 2007-2008 school year but 2008-2009 was its first full year of operation. DPP funding is used to provide parents with tuition credits to enable them to enroll their children in high-quality preschool so that they are better prepared to begin kindergarten. During the 2013-2014 school year tuition credits ranged from \$10 to \$419 per month; the average credit was \$322 per month. In 2007, the maximum credit was \$1,400 but it has been since reduced due to budget constraints. The amount of the tuition credit varies by the quality of the program in which the child is enrolled, family income and size, and the amount of time the child attends the program (which includes average attendance, full- or part-time enrollment, and whether the child participates in extended day care). DPP programs can also receive a “mini-grant” to purchase supplies and materials to improve classroom quality. DPP funding is also available for professional development and coaching to improve staff knowledge and skills as well as to support programs’ quality rating assessment.

Tuition credit levels are set based on programs’ quality rating, with higher quality programs receiving larger tuition credits per child. Indicators of structural quality, like teacher qualifications, class size, curricula, and professional development, vary across programs. For example, programs with a quality rating of 4 stars tend to have most staff with at least an AA in early childhood education or BA, but programs with a rating of 2 or 3 stars tend to have only some staff with an AA in ECE. Evaluations have indicated that the tuition credit has encouraged parents to choose higher quality programs for their children.

During the 2013-2014 school year, DPP approved 5,467 children for tuition credits, which amounts to approximately 70 percent of Denver’s 4-year-olds. Just over half of these children came from families with incomes less than \$30,000 per year (two-thirds of children come from families living below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level). Levels of participation in the program have been stable recently, despite downturns in tuition amounts during recession years, which may mean the program is reaching as many children as are interested.

Programs must be licensed in order to qualify for DPP. DPP can be provided by community-based organizations, including both centers and home-based providers, as well as the Denver Public Schools.

According to the Denver Public Schools Fact Sheet: “Since 2008, the number of third graders proficient or above in reading has increased 47 percent in Denver Public Schools. Despite this increase, 39 percent, or nearly 2,400 third graders were not proficient in reading in 2013.” In addition, “State standardized tests indicate that the percentage of DPS students proficient or advanced is improving over time in both reading and math with 54 percent proficient in reading and 46 percent proficient in math.” Finally, “In 2013, 2,928 (61 percent) Denver Public School students earned diplomas in four years.” And “47 percent, or 1,705 Denver Public Schools students were enrolled in college the fall after graduating or completing in 2012.”

The Public School Fact Sheet (with information from the Colorado Department of Public Information) reports that: “Full-Day Kindergarten Denver Public Schools offer full-day kindergarten programs to children and families. The half-day kindergarten program is free to all families and the full-day option is free to those eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For families earning more than 185 percent of the federal poverty line, tuition payments are

determined based on a sliding scale. Enrollment in full-day kindergarten has increased to 7,662 (99 percent) children in Denver Public Schools in the 2013-2014 school year.” (From 72 percent in 2007-2008.)

**Essential Elements**

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Denver meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **one** other. Because of the delivery system, of tuition vouchers to parents, with increased funding for higher quality program enrollment, it is challenging to report on services across all programs. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	–	–	●	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

**Rationale**

**Enabling Environment**

**Political will.** Democratic Mayor Michael Hancock supports the program as evidenced by the 2014 ballot initiative he proposed to renew the program. This proposal was supported by members of the city council, including Albus Brooks. In 2014, voters approved an increased tax of 0.15 percent on purchases of over \$100, extending the program that was set to expire in 2016 through 2026. Approximately \$11 million annually supports DPP (although this is expected to increase); approximately 80 percent of this amount is then used for tuition credits that reduce the amount of money parents pay to send their children to preschool. DPP serves only 4-year-olds who live in the city or county of Denver (however, DPP programs may be located outside of Denver).

Mayor Hancock has worked closely with school districts and other organizations to support DPP. In the initial ballot vote the city had opposition from family child care initially, but it was not on the radar this time. They have had lots of support from the business community, and foundations, including Gary Community Investment.

Other strong supporters in the region include Univision. Voters appear to favor the program, which has now existed long enough to be considered a regular part of the city’s educational landscape; 55.27 percent of voters approved renewing the tax to extend the program through 2026 and 44.73 percent voted against it. It was only very narrowly passed in 2006, with a recount required.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Denver Preschool Program, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) created for managing DPP. DPP was created by the City and County of Denver.

DPP is required to provide status reports to the Denver Office of Children's Affairs (formerly the Mayor's Office for Education and Children), a Denver city agency. A seven-member board of directors and a 25-member advisory board oversee the program. DPP has four administrative staff: a President/Chief Executive Officer, a Senior Director of Strategy and Communications, a Program Director, and a Business Manager. Ties with the public schools are close.

## **Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies**

**Education and compensation.** Lead teachers are not required to have a BA and there is not salary parity with K-3 teachers.

**Adult-child ratios.** Licensing requires an adult-child ratio of 1:12 for classrooms with children 4- to 5-years-old. The class size requirement for this age group in 24, therefore not meeting the Essential Elements requirement of 22 children and ratio of 1:11.

**Learning time.** Program operating schedule varies: part-time programs provide at least 5 hours per week; full-day programs provide at least 25 hours per week; and extended day programs provide at least 33 hours per week.

**Two adults in the classroom.** Licensing requires two adults in the room, and programs must be licensed to be involved. The program provides incentives for higher quality; they rate programs using the state's system plus CLASS observation for every classroom. Then they invest in improvement of the programs, classroom materials, PD, and coaching.

**Age-appropriate learning standards:** Originally established in 2007, the Colorado Building Blocks for Early Development and Learning was revised in 2011 to align with the Colorado P-12 Academic Standards. Building Blocks was replaced by the Colorado Early Learning & Development Guidelines (ELDG's) in January 2013. The ELDG's address all developmental and academic fields, are inclusive of all children ages birth to 8 years, and align with the Colorado P-12 Academic Standards, which include preschool and have incorporated the Common Core State Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Curriculum varies. A core value of the program is that the curriculum is aligned with the state early learning standards. Since the curriculum can vary, not all will be research-based. The new QRIS does have an element about expecting using a curriculum that is tied to the CO Early Learning and Development guidelines.

**Support for students with special needs.** The program does not "provide anything different to address children with special needs." Training discusses inclusive classrooms, culturally diverse classrooms etc., and specific professional development is available. College coursework in those areas is also available.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** There is nothing specific in support of dual language Learners—other than what is embedded in the programs.

From the Denver Public Schools Fact Sheet: "According to the Colorado Department of Education, the number of English Language Learners in Denver has increased 57 percent since 2000. By 2012, approximately 30,000 (37 percent) Denver Public School students were English language learners." In 2013-2014, about 50 percent of the DPP children were Hispanic; and 23 percent reported that Spanish was their home language.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** In an effort to further improve program quality, DPP piloted the use of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) during the 2012-2013 school year with plans to implement its use in 2013-2014. The CLASS ratings are intended to be used as a supplement to Qualistar star ratings. In 2014, average CLASS scores (on a scale of 1 to 7 with 7 representing the highest level of quality) in a sample of 129 classrooms were: Emotional support = 6.46, Classroom Organization = 5.96, Instructional Support = 2.78. This means 91 percent of classrooms scored in the high quality range in Emotional Support, 63 percent scored in the high quality range in Classroom Organization, and 64 percent scored in the low quality range in Instructional Support. CLASS scores were similar across community-based programs and programs located in the Denver Public Schools.

**Child assessments.** Formative assessments are not required, however Colorado's Results Matter system utilizes GOLD and offers technical assistance and support to programs. DPP are not required to participate in Results Matter.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** DPP programs must participate in a three-part quality improvement process: (1) introduction to quality orientation, (2) quality rating, (3) develop a quality improvement plan. Children in 2013-2014 were served by 175 different providers at 252 sites. Two hundred and seven of the 252 sites (82 percent) have quality ratings of 3 or 4 (on a scale of 1 to 4). QualiStar (Colorado's QRIS system) currently conducts the CLASS observation. This will be transitioning to Colorado Shines.

Quality ratings are based on five areas of preschool classroom quality: (1) learning environment, (2) family partnership, (3) staff training and education, (4) adult-to-child ratio, and (5) accreditation through a national organization. Programs can earn a total of 42 points (with intervals between star levels of about 7 points). The system includes professional development, financial resources for materials and equipment, coaching, and funding for the quality rating process. Programs receive higher quality ratings for using assessment results to individualize curricula and lesson planning. Programs also receive higher ratings for completing self-assessments that inform the quality improvement system. Programs are required to get re-rated every two years and receive higher levels of funding if they meet higher quality standards.

DPP is required to complete an annual program evaluation. The child outcomes portion of DPP addresses 3 questions: (1) Do children make progress in their development while in DPP early learning environments? (2) To what extent are children enrolled in DPP ready for kindergarten?; and (3) Do children from different income levels and with a different primary language make similar progress in their development while in DPP early learning environments? In the fall and spring or each year DPP assesses a random sample of children in order to demonstrate progress made as a result of attending DPP. Results indicate the children enrolled in DPP improve in vocabulary, literacy, and math as well as social-emotional skills. DPP graduates were more likely than other kindergarteners to be reading on grade level at the end of kindergarten. Children who attended DPP have demonstrated sustained progress through third grade: they were more likely than children who did not attend the program to be advanced or proficient on state reading tests in third grade. Although DPP has demonstrated positive impacts on children, impacts have been smaller than those of other high quality publicly funded programs. CLASS has also been implemented as part of DPP's yearly evaluation.

**Professional development.** DPP funds can be used for staff professional development and coaching. Coaching has been a focus from the beginning, although now a 'menu' of PD options is offered. Seventy-three percent of community preschool programs reported receiving coaching from DPP. All staff who work with children must



complete a minimum of 15 clock hours of training each year beginning with the start date of the employee; and at least three clock hours per year must be in the focus of social emotional development.

In the QRIS, programs are encouraged to invest in areas of greatest need. Programs used to have lots of flexibility in that, now every program will work with a coach/Quality Improvement Advisor for 3 hours—to develop a Quality Improvement Plan based on their ratings and CLASS. Everything that they do with program dollars must be tied to what they agree on with their advisor. They started with PD, cost of materials, coaching; once they began using CLASS they started to look at the classroom and the teacher, really focusing on teacher-child interactions, and effectively using child assessment and curriculum.

**Integrated system.** There are some components of Colorado’s early childhood system that have been intentionally aligned, however DPP is not fully integrated into this system. The Results Matter system offers training and support in the use of GOLD. When program participate they are able to accumulate points in Colorado Shines, Colorado’s QRIS. Colorado's Early Childhood Credential 2.0 is aligned with the Colorado Shines workforce qualifications quality indicator. The ELDS have been integrated into Higher Education courses. The Early Childhood Competencies Framework is aligned with Colorado's Quality Standards for Teachers and Principals that has been adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

[Augenblick, Palaich and Associates - Early Childhood Education \(consulting firm who conducted evaluation of DPP\)](#)

Colorado Department of Education. (2014). Pupil Membership for 2013-District Data; Pupil Membership by District and Grade Level. Retrieved January 2014, from Colorado Department of Education:  
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[Colorado Shines](#)

[Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System](#)

[Denver Preschool Program Quality Improvement](#)

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<https://www.denvergov.org/Portals/713/documents/2014%20Data—Lisa/DPS%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

[DPP home](#)

[DPP 2010 Impact Report](#)

[Denver Preschool Program - Mayor](#)

*Long Term Persistence Effects of the Denver Preschool Program* by Roberson, McClelland, Palaich, Rooney, & Workman. Augenblick, Palaich and Associates

[Qualistar Rating Components](#)

[Qualistar: CO Shines](#)



## San Antonio

### Pre-K 4 SA

In 2011, the Brain Power task force convened by then-Mayor Julián Castro, decided that a high-quality, full-day preschool program for 4-year-olds would be an effective method for improving the quality of the educational trajectory for San Antonio's youth. In November 2012, voters approved a 1/8 cent sales tax to fund Pre-K 4 SA, which was estimated to raise \$31 million for the program. After 8 years, the program will be subject to voter-reauthorization in November 2020.

Four-year-old children are eligible to enroll in the program if they meet one of six criteria, including eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (185 percent of the federal poverty level). Ten percent of slots are reserved for children who do not meet the eligibility criteria and pay tuition on a sliding scale, ranging from \$64 to \$6,975 per year.

Enrollment has increased since the program's inception: there were about 700 slots in 2014, 1500 in 2015, and 3700 slots are planned by 2017 (which is the target peak enrollment). In 2015, Pre-K 4 SA served approximately 26 percent of eligible 4-year-olds not already enrolled in full-day preschool. Children are selected to participate through a lottery. Per-child spending, one indicator of program quality, is high in San Antonio, estimated to be \$14,631 in 2015, which is higher than all state-funded initiatives in 2014 (although slightly lower than Washington D.C.).

During the first year of Pre-K 4 SA, children were served in two Education Excellence Centers, increasing to four Education Centers strategically located in the four quadrants of San Antonio in year two. Beginning in 2016-2017, school districts, charter schools, private schools, and community providers can apply for competitive grants to provide full-day and/or enhanced Pre-K services. Competitive grants will be used to serve 1,700 children, and the Education Excellence Centers will serve 2,000 children.

Among the 16 schools districts in San Antonio, 7 participate; 2 others are military schools and do not participate, but offer a similar preschool program; 2-3 districts that are partly outside the city and do not participate hope to next year. It has been challenging for the school districts in terms of having appropriate facilities available to keep up with the demand.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). San Antonio meets **10** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **three** others. Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	–	○	●	–	●	○	●	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Voters in San Antonio enthusiastically supported the original initiative proposed by former Mayor Castro, after extensive citizen participation and review of proposals. Voters approved it in 2012, and current Mayor Ivy Taylor is also supportive. Pre-K 4 SA has hired a full-time communications person who is helping to target voters who don't have 4-year-olds.

Opposition to the program, as well as with all Texas pre-K efforts, has been with the Tea Party. Advocates have found that one of their best tools in engaging support is the independent evaluation by Edvance of Pre-K in San Antonio; NIEER is a partner in the evaluation. Pre-K 4 SA reports that 98 percent of parents are very satisfied with services.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** Pre-K 4 SA is governed by a corporation for education created by the City Council, and has an 11-member board appointed by the City Council. The City Council is responsible for approving the program's annual budget, direct voter support for the tax funds will not come up again until 2020.

Pre-K 4 SA has been lead by Kathy Bruck (Chief Executive Office) since May 2013. Kathy Bruck has 37 years of experience in the Harlandale Independent School District as the Special Education Supervisor and Director, Elementary Principal, Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, and Chief Instructional Officer. She wrote and received the Early Start Pre-K Grant and the Texas Kindergarten Ready Grant that expanded prekindergarten in her district. Early in her career, she was an early childhood teacher for children with disabilities.

The Pre-K 4SA staff also includes administrative and fiscal support and a team of five Directors. Each of the four Education Centers has its own Director. The Professional Development Department also has a Director who oversees a team of Professional Development Coaches.

Pre-K 4 SA has a good relationship with most local colleges and universities that have teacher education programs. Permission was recently granted by the Texas Education Agency to have student teachers assigned to them.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** Teachers are required to have at least a Bachelor's degree and certification in early childhood, plus three years of experience as an early childhood teacher. Teachers are employees of the City of San Antonio and salaries range from \$60,000 to \$90,000 with most salaries falling around \$70,000. Public schools do not provide extended day.

In the first year of the program all teachers had at least a Bachelor's degree and 30% had a master's degree. In Pre-K 4 SA teachers are paid a little more than teachers in public school, because the workday and year is slightly longer. The program follows the public school calendar.

In Pre-K 4 SA, 70 percent of the students stay for extended-day; the extended school day begins at 7:15 am and extends to 6 pm. The teacher day ends at between 4:00 and 4:30. A separate group of teachers comprised primarily of college students begin working at about 2:30 and work in the classrooms with the children and teachers through the end of the extended day. The students observe teachers' classroom management skills and how the teachers work with kids. The college students have a full-time coordinator.

**Adult-child ratios.** All Pre-K 4 SA classrooms are limited to 20 children with a lead and assistant teacher, for a maximum adult to child ratio of 2:20 or 1:10.

**Learning time.** All programs operate 7 hours per day and also offer extended day services. Public schools do not provide extended day. Pre-K 4 SA operated 5 days per week, 177 days per year (on the same schedule as the public schools). Average attendance was 92 percent and children attended an average of 154 days.

**Two adults in the classroom.** All Pre-K 4 SA classrooms are limited to 20 children with a lead and assistant teacher.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Pre-K 4 SA follows the Texas early learning standards closely. Regular training sessions on the standards are offered not only to Pre-K 4 SA teachers but also Kindergarten through grade two teachers. Efforts are also being planned to educate administrators in public schools and some child care program directors about developmentally appropriate practice for four-year-olds.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Classrooms use developmentally appropriate curricula, emphasize self-directed, active learning, and focus on math and literacy. Pre-K 4 SA also prioritizes family engagement and provides support services. On a Teacher Survey for Early Education Quality (TSEEQ) administered in the spring of 2013, 71 teachers reported frequently using developmentally appropriate practices including encouraging children to share and discuss activities and make predictions, and 85 percent of teachers reported following a published or written curriculum.

Pre-K 4 SA follows the Texas Prekindergarten guidelines, and currently teachers are implementing a variety of curricula including Creative Curriculum, Frog Street, and they report taking 'a lot of strategies from HighScope and some from Reggio Emilia,' in terms of learning from the student, morning meeting, conflict resolution, plan-do-review, and large-group/small group. The directors do instructional rounds at each campus, plus each center's own directors are in the classroom 'all the time.'

Each small group of teachers (4 on a team) has a professional learning community meeting every week to look at fine-tuning teaching practices. The program has been focusing on using the CLASS (which they use to evaluate teachers) as a tool for raising instructional support to a higher level.

Despite all the efforts described above it does not appear that a system is in place to ensure that all programs implement evidence-based curriculum well with the necessary guidance, training, and professional development.

**Support for students with special needs.** Pre-K 4 SA works closely with the school districts to support students with special needs. If children are already identified for special education services, the teachers review the IEP and

talk with the district. Pre-K 4 SA classrooms have a maximum 20 children with 2 teachers, and 5 special education teachers at each center can provide the following supports Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech Therapy. In addition, full-time Registered Nurses are at every center. They can provide supports such as a behavior plan, assistance with medical disabilities, or support for language delays, but are not well equipped to teach children with significant needs. If children are not identified until after entering the program, Pre-K 4 SA observes and then engages in the Response to Intervention (RtI) process by providing the appropriate intervention, documenting the process, contacting the school district, and engaging in a parent meeting. Students with significant needs that may require, for example, a 1:3 ratio, might be placed in non-Pre-K 4 SA classrooms.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** Pre-K 4 SA features fully certified bilingual teachers. They're in a 90/10-language use model, with Spanish used 90 percent of the time and English for about 10 percent, in all centers. The biggest school district has 130 languages represented. Children whose primary language is other than English are served in an English as a Second Language (ESL) setting with ESL certified teachers. San Antonio uses the term ESL, however there are coaches with expertise in bilingualism. In the first year, 85 percent of children served were Hispanic. All instructional materials, and parent communications are offered in Spanish, as appropriate for identified students.

According to the US Census Bureau, 45.4 percent of the population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## **Strong Program Practices**

**High-quality teaching.** Quality was evaluated with classroom observations as part of Edvance's evaluation. On the Teacher Survey for Early Education Quality (TSEEQ), teachers reported providing stimulating and developmentally appropriate learning environments (Year 1). CLASS observations (on a scale of 1 to 7 with 7 representing the highest level of quality) increased over 3 years of the evaluation. Scores were strong for Emotional Support (averaging 6.28 in Year 1 and 6.44 in Year 3) and Classroom Organization (averaging 5.75 in Year 1 and 5.98 in Year 3). Instructional Support rose from 2.82 in Year 1 to a more satisfactory 3.67 in Year 3 (with an average of 4.12 in the 2 directly operated centers). In Year 1, the Emerging Academics Snapshot found that children spent 32 percent of time in whole group and 28 percent in free choice, and that 17 percent of interactions between teachers and children were characterized by elaborated interactions.

**Child assessments.** The program uses TS GOLD 3 times a year. Data from the observations are shared with parents who are required to come to all and spring evaluation reports.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** Evaluators use CLASS, and there is now a fidelity assessment looking at all four centers in different quadrants of the city, working to ensure that the model stays consistent and is carried out effectively throughout. Reports using CLASS and the comparative data help with the business community in particular, say agency representatives, and to counter opposition to the program.

Edvance completed an independent evaluation of the program. Children's kindergarten readiness was measured by TS GOLD (in the fall, winter, and spring) and was compared to a nationally representative sample. Results of the evaluation suggest that children started the year behind the normed sample but surpassed the norm in 3 of 6 outcomes (Cognitive, literacy, and math). The goal of the evaluation was to determine whether children in Pre-K 4 SA made gains in kindergarten readiness over the school year. Teachers reported frequently engaging in assessment

activities (based on the TSEEQ). This will be the first year in process of getting comparison scores, as the first year children are finishing kindergarten, and the evaluation will follow children up through third grade.

**Professional development.** Assistants are required to have a minimum of 48 hours of college coursework in ECE and 3 years of ECE teaching. Teachers participate in three weeks of professional development (PD) before school starts, and weekly participate in 'learning communities' during the school year. Four components of PD are offered: (1) classroom training with master teachers at the model center, (2) instructional coaching in school district classrooms, (3) in-service training, and (4) monthly workshops, curriculum alignment, and coaching for community child care providers at the centers. Teachers reported that supervisors were almost always (between frequently and always) available to answer questions about the curriculum. There is a director of professional development. There is planning time as well—every week teachers meet in small groups, and at 3:00 pm they are released to work with teams for about an hour on planning.

The coaching model is described on the Pre-K 4 SA [website](#). Coaching is conducted by 14 coaches and encompasses a four-step method including goal setting, observation, feedback, and strategic planning. All of which provides hands-on, individualized coaching to directly address the needs of teachers.

**Integrated system.** The state's new quality legislation (HB 4, 2015) introduces some elements of an integrated system, which San Antonio has already met in Pre-K 4 SA. Programs are intended to use a research-based curriculum that is aligned with the early learning standards, child assessment, and teachers' professional development. The district is seeking to evaluate Pre-K 4 SA based on child progress.

## Key Contacts

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## Resources

Pre-K 4 San Antonio, City of San Antonio, [Pre-K 4 SA Early Childhood Initiative](#)

Pre-K 4 San Antonio, City of San Antonio, [Pre-K 4 SA Evaluation Report Year 1](#)

Pre-K 4 San Antonio, City of San Antonio, [Pre-K 4 SA Leadership](#)

Pre-K 4 San Antonio, City of San Antonio, [Pre-K 4 SA - Summary Fact Sheet](#)





## San Francisco Preschool for All

San Francisco First 5 has made access to high quality preschool a priority through its Preschool for All (PFA) Initiative. Preschool for All in San Francisco began during the 2005-2006 school year and has expanded throughout the county, providing access to high-quality preschool to all 4-year-old children in San Francisco County, regardless of family income. PFA is funded by Proposition H, which was passed by San Francisco voters in 2004 and created the Public Education Enrichment Fund (PEEF). PFA provides funding to both private and public preschool programs to serve 4-year-olds in a high quality program and also provides training and technical assistance. The setting of the program determines if the costs will be partially or completely covered by First 5 San Francisco. All programs must meet California Community Care licensing requirements.

First 5 San Francisco administers PFA and contracts with qualified preschool providers to offer the program. PFA funding can be used to enhance the quality of existing programs that are already free of cost (or of minimal cost) to families, such as State Preschool or Head Start. For other programs serving tuition-paying children, PFA funding can be used to provide a free part-day program or reduce the cost of a full-day program (about a 25 percent reduction in cost).

PFA is a universal program. All “pre-kindergarteners” (as determined by kindergarten eligibility guidelines) living in the City of San Francisco are eligible to attend the program. Priority for enrollment is given to homeless children, and exceptions to the age requirements may be made for older children with documented disabilities or special needs. In 2011-2012 PFA provided support to 121 sites in San Francisco and served over 5,000 children, which is up from about 3,000 children in 2007. Enrollment steadily increased during the first several years of the program’s operation: enrollment increased from 72 percent of 4-year-olds in 2007 to 83 percent in 2009. Increases in enrollment over this period were largest for Latinos and African Americans.

In fiscal year 2012-2013, PFA’s allocation was \$17.8 million but the program’s expenditures were expected to exceed \$20.5 million. The per-child PFA reimbursement rate varies between about \$4,730 and \$5,725, depending on staff qualifications. PFA funds should be used to improve program quality in programs that serve subsidized children. Funds can also be used to reduce parent tuition, staff salary and benefits, training and professional development, equipment, materials/supplies, field trips, and enrichment activities. Programs must submit line item budgets.

## Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). San Francisco meets **six** of the 15 Essential Elements and partially meets **five** others. Although it appears that San Francisco does not satisfy many of these standards, they note that they are “totally aligned with most of these

standards, but we’ve opted to take a softer approach to achieving them. So, rather than hardwire them in as requirements and mandates, we are providing incentives and supports to get there.” Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size Ratio	Hours Dose	Two Adults	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	Assessment	Data Driven	PD	Integrated System
●	●	–	–	–	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	–	○

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

## Rationale

### Enabling Environment

**Political will.** Preschool for All is funded by Proposition H, which was passed by San Francisco voters in 2004 (71 percent of voters supported this initiative) and created the Public Education Enrichment Fund (PEEF). PFA was set to go through 2015, but voters reauthorized the program in November 2014. Almost 75 percent of voters supported the Children and Families First Proposition C, which extended funding for PFA for 26 years. It also increases funding to reach 860 additional children and expands eligibility to include 3- and 5- year-olds, although priority remains on 4-year-olds. The renewal in 2014 was supported by Mayor Ed Lee and all 11 city supervisors. No organizations came forward to oppose the ballot initiative.

Because of economic problems, the city has had to borrow 25 percent of the resources in the PEEF funds to cover deficits on other parts of the city budget, resulting in fewer resources for PFA.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** In 2012 the Office of Early Care and Education (OECE) was created in the Mayor’s office to align and coordinate programs and funding across various departments/programs including the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families; the San Francisco First Five Commission; the Human Services Agency; and the San Francisco Unified School District. OECE aims to improve access to ECE and improve the ECE workforce. Barbara Coccodrilli Carlson was the first director of OECE.

First 5 California, which was created by voter approved Proposition 10, oversees PFA. It is a public agency dedicated to the development of young children. Beginning in 2016, First 5 will transition the administration of PFA to OECE.

### Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies

**Education and compensation.** PFA lead teachers are required to have a minimum of a Child Development Permit, which requires 24 units of ECE/CD including core course plus 16 general education units. The master teacher permit requires an additional 6 units of specialization and 2 units in adult supervision. There are no minimum teacher pay rates by education level. All staff receive paid time off. There is no BA requirement for lead teachers, but close to 80 percent of lead teachers have them anyway.

**Adult-child ratios.** Classrooms can have a maximum of 24 children enrolled. The required teacher to child ratio is 1:8.

**Learning time.** PFA funds a half-day program (between 2.5 and 3.5 hours per day), five days per week, for 175 to 245 days per year. Programs can use five of those days for staff in-service training and development. PFA programs must provide up to half a day of preschool to qualifying families free of charge but can serve children for additional time using other funding. PFA programs must provide 612.5 hours of service per year. Programs may choose to provide PFA during the summer (in addition to the school year). In this case, programs operate for 2.5 hours per day, 245 days per year.

**Two adults in the classroom.** The required teacher to child ratio is 1:8. If there are more than 16 children, there are 3 adults.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** The California Preschool Learning Foundations (Foundations) developed in 2008, focused on social emotional development, language and literacy, mathematics and English language development. A second volume, released in December 2011, also focused on visual and performing arts as well as health and physical development. In September 2013, science and history/social science were addressed in a third and final volume.

The CDE/EESD released the alignment publication between the Foundations and Common Core State Standards.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Curricula must align with California's early learning standards, the Preschool Learning Foundations. Curricula used in PFA programs must be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. All curricula must follow standards in the PFA Program Quality Guidelines, which are consistent with the California Preschool Learning Foundations. Curricula must include (1) learning and development goals, (2) activities, experiences, and environments in which to achieve the goals, (3) interactive strategies to support development across multiple domains, and (4) developmentally appropriate materials. PFA curricula must align with the California Preschool Curriculum Framework which focuses on integrating learning into children's play, implementing child-directed and teacher-guided activities, planning environments, interactions, routines, and materials that engage children in learning, and individualizing curriculum based on children's knowledge, skills, needs and interests.

**Support for students with special needs.** Supporting inclusion for children with special needs is a priority of Proposition H. PFA programs are expected to serve children of all skill and ability levels and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and California Civil Rights Laws. Programs are allowed to make exceptions to the age-eligibility requirements to accommodate older children documented developmental delays or special needs. Programs must also screen all children within 60 days of entering the program to help with identification of delays, disabilities, and special needs. All PFA teachers must participate in a one time training (minimum of 8 hours) in inclusion and/or meeting the needs of children with special needs/disabilities. At least one teacher per year must complete this training until all teachers have completed it. All teachers must also participate in at least one in-service each year in inclusion and/or meeting the needs of children with special needs/disabilities. At least one staff member in each PFA classroom serving children with special needs must have taken at least one college course in caring for children with disabilities.

**Support for dual (English) language learners.** PFA curricula must be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate. California Preschool Curriculum Framework contains specific principles and strategies for teaching ELLs.

All PFA teachers must participate in a one-time training (minimum of 8 hours) in language acquisition and literacy for DLLs. At least one teacher per year must complete this training until all teachers have completed it. All teachers must also participate in at least one in-service each year in language acquisition and literacy for DLLs.

According to the [US Census Bureau](#), 45% of the California population (age 5+) speaks a language other than English at home.

## Strong Program Practices

**High-quality teaching.** CLASS is used as part of the program assessment. Classrooms must be rated as a 4.5 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 7) on the ECERS-R in order to receive PFA funding (or a 4.5 or higher on the FDCRS for family child care programs). Similarly, each site that receives PFA funding must have an average ECERS-R score of at least 4 across all classrooms.

In 2012 Applied Survey Research was hired by First 5 San Francisco to evaluate PFA. Classroom observations using the CLASS were conducted in 51 classrooms that were randomly from the classrooms not involved in fall 2011 child assessments. Average CLASS scores were as follows: Emotional Support 6.08 (92 percent scoring >5), Classroom Organization 5.47 (75 percent scoring >5), Instructional Support 3.26 (80 percent scoring in the 3 to 5 range). Average CLASS scores were similar to results from a 2006-2007 evaluation completed by AIR.

**Child assessments.** At the pre-K level, assessments are classroom-based and designed to help teachers and administrators improve outcomes for children. Programs also conduct at least two assessments children's developmental progress using the Desired Results Developmental Profile, Preschool (DRDP-PS). Assessments are used to track child progress, and inform instructional and programmatic decisions. PFA programs must complete a developmental screening of all children within 60 days of enrollment into the program to identify delays, disabilities, special needs, and individual strengths and needs.

**Data-driven decision-making and independent evaluation.** In 2012, First 5 San Francisco secured a three-year Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge grant (RTT-ELC) from the California Department of Education, to further develop and refine a Quality Improvement and Rating System (QRIS) in San Francisco. In partnership with PFA sites, San Francisco piloted the state's QRIS hybrid matrix, a rating protocol comprising seven elements of quality.

As previously described, in 2012 Applied Survey Research was hired by First 5 San Francisco to evaluate PFA. In addition to the classroom quality, they assessed child outcomes. They found significant positive impacts of PFA on children's literacy, math, and self-regulation skills but did not find impacts on vocabulary.

**Professional development.** PFA provides professional development throughout the year. Teacher training and technical assistance is a priority under Proposition H. Each program has a plan for ongoing staff development and staff are provided with release time to attend professional development activities. There are no annual professional development requirements, but the city offers more than 100 days of voluntary training a year, and for the most part, those trainings are fully enrolled with teachers.

**Integrated system.** PFA programs must meet PFA Program Quality Guidelines, which are aligned with the CA Preschool Learning Foundations. The Foundations, Frameworks, and the DRDP provide the detail and a developmental continuum to assist quality programs prepare children for transitional kindergarten and their ability

to be successful in grades K-3. The Foundations and the DRDP are used together to plan the environment, play, learning activities, and instruction to meet the needs of the children and provide high-quality experiences.

## **Key Contacts**

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## **Resources**

[AIR Evaluation](#)  
[California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks](#)

[Evaluating PFA Effectiveness Research Brief August 2013](#)  
[Evaluating PFA Effectiveness Research Summary August 2013](#)  
[Evaluating PFA Quality Research Brief August 2013](#)  
[First 5 SF Frequently Asked Questions](#)  
[First 5 San Francisco Community Report](#)  
[PFA Baseline Criteria](#)  
[Preschool For All Providers](#)

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- <sup>1</sup> Minervino, J. (2014). *Lessons from Research and the Classroom: Implementing High-Quality Pre-K that Makes a Difference for Young Children*. Retrieved October 16, 2015 from [https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/Lessons%20from%20Research%20and%20the%20Classroom\\_September%202014.pdf#page=23](https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/Lessons%20from%20Research%20and%20the%20Classroom_September%202014.pdf#page=23)
- <sup>2</sup> Head Start enrollment by age group. Retrieved October 30, 2015 from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5938-head-start-enrollment-by-age-group#detailed/1/any/false/36,133,16,12,11/1830,558,559,1831,122/12570>
- <sup>3</sup> Remarkably, accurate figures on Head Start enrollment are difficult to obtain as the program tends to report the number of children enrolled during a year including all who come and go rather than the number enrolled at a point in time (as is the case for public school enrollment). ACF data on the number of federally funded places in Head Start yield estimates of 8 percent at age 3 and 10 percent at age 4, while PIR data on all enrollment regardless of funding source and duration of attendance leads to estimates of 10 percent at 3 and 12 percent at 4.
- <sup>4</sup> Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved October 27, 2015 from <http://nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2014>
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). Table 202.10. Enrollment of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children in preprimary programs by age of type of child, level of program, control of program, and attendance status: selected years, 1970 through 2013. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics (2014 ed.)*. Retrieved October 30, 2015 from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_202.10.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_202.10.asp)
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- <sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). Table 202.60. Percentage distribution of quality rating of child care arrangements of children at about 4 years of age, by type of arrangement and selected child and family characteristics: 2005-06. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics (2014 ed.)*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14\\_202.60.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_202.60.asp?current=yes) Source: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, Longitudinal 9-month-Kindergarten Restricted-Use Data File.
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<sup>9</sup> Barnett, W.S. & Lamy, C.E. (2013). Achievement gaps start early: Preschool can help. In P.L. Carter & K.G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 98-110). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

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<sup>11</sup> CLASS is the [Classroom Assessment Scoring System](#), which is an observational tool that allows assessing quality in early childhood environments. ECERS is the [Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale](#), which assesses environmental supports and the quality of the process in the early childhood setting.