Massachusetts

Massachusetts established its Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in 2005 to improve affordability, access, and quality of preschool education services. Concurrently, the state launched the Universal Pre-kindergarten (UPK) initiative. UPK accepts children ages 2 years, 9 months until they reach the locally determined kindergarten eligibility age.

The UPK initiative awards grants to Head Start programs, public schools, family child care, private child care, and faith-based centers that promote school readiness and positive outcomes for students. UPK is available in 97 towns, and programs must operate or provide access to full-day, full-year services, as well as follow specific standards for child assessments. Programs must also use the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and the Early Childhood Program Standards. All children may enroll in participating UPK programs regardless of income, though programs must serve or be willing to serve children from families with income levels at or below 85 percent of the state median income (SMI).

The UPK initiative receives funding from two streams. The majority is child subsidy money, with a UPK add-on amount from the state to improve program quality. In its first year, the state distributed an additional $1 million in planning grants to help programs meet eligibility to receive UPK funding. In FY 2008, the state increased UPK spending from $4.7 million to $7.1 million to expand services to additional children. Funding was increased again in FY 2009, to $10.8 million, in order to target at-risk communities. In addition to this state funding, UPK received roughly $44.8 million in CCDF subsidy funds in the 2008-2009 program year. However, in the 2009-2010 program year there was a $2.9 million cut, reducing UPK grants by 37 percent.

This program was evaluated for process quality during the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. Starting in the 2010-2011 program year, UPK will require grantees to participate in its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and grantees will be asked to submit child-level information to build a longitudinal data system within the Massachusetts state education agencies.

Another initiative, Grant 391, was established in 1985 to fund typically developing preschool children to match the number of students with disabilities served in inclusion classrooms. Program grantees are located in public schools in 96 districts, and any child without disabilities is eligible.

The Massachusetts School Improvement Act of 1985 established the Community Partnerships for Children (CPC, also called Preschool Direct and Preschool Scholarships), which coordinates planning and delivery of services offered by all early education and care programs within a funded community. The initiative has served 3- and 4-year-olds with working parents since 1996, and continues to coordinate and expand services based on community resources and needs. Beginning in November 2008, the CPC program dissolved, although their programs still provide care to private paying families and families under the subsidy system. As a result of this change in program structure, CPC no longer fits NIEER’s definition for a state-funded prekindergarten initiative.

In addition to the above programs, Massachusetts provides supplemental funding for the federal Head Start program. In the 2009-2010 program year, the state provided $7.5 million to enhance teacher salaries as well as other quality improvements, and to serve an additional 304 Head Start children. This profile focuses on UPK and Grant 391, which are reported together because both programs have similar requirements and standards.
MASSACHUSETTS UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (UPK) AND GRANT 391 PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state program enrollment ........................................ 13,468
School districts that offer ........................................... 28% (towns, UPK)
state program .............................................................. 32% (Grant 391)
Income requirement ............... 85% SMI (UPK); None (Grant 391)
Hours of operation .............................. Determined locally
Operating schedule ........................................... Determined locally
Special education enrollment ................................. 9,876
Federally funded Head Start enrollment .......................... 10,167
State-funded Head Start enrollment ............................... 264

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY

Early learning standards ........................................ Comprehensive
Teacher degree .............................................. BA (public); None (nonpublic)
Teacher specialized .............. EC teachers of students with and
training without disabilities, Pre-K–2 (public); 3 credits (nonpublic)
Assistant teacher degree .............. HSD (public); None (nonpublic)
Teacher in-service .................. 20 clock hours (UPK); At least 15 hours/year
150 clock hours/5 yrs (Grant 391)
Maximum class size ......................... 20 or lower
3-year-olds ........................................ 20 (UPK); 15 (Grant 391)
4-year-olds ........................................ 20 (UPK); 15 (Grant 391)
Staff-child ratio .............................. 1:10 or better
3-year-olds ........................................ 1:10 (UPK); 1:7 (Grant 391)
4-year-olds ........................................ 1:10 (UPK); 1:7 (Grant 391)
Screening/referral ...................... Vision, hearing, health;
and support services and support services at least 1 support service
Meals .......................................................... Depend on length of program day
Monitoring .............................................. Site visits and other monitoring

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ........................................... $52,462,817
Local match required? .................. No
State Head Start spending ................................. $7,500,000
State spending per child enrolled ......................... $3,895
All reported spending per child enrolled* ................. $3,895

SPEXPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

3-YEAR-OLDS 4-YEAR-OLDS

PRE-K** $3,895
HDST** $10,499
K–12*** $15,678

$ THOUSANDS

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

%

3-YEAR-OLDS 4-YEAR-OLDS

86% 14%
8% 8%
4% 4%
6% 74%
4%

1 This figure includes $31,564,596 in TANF/CCDF funds as well as $3,997,690 in ARRA funds. Total spending, including federal and local funding, for UPK was $39,564,596 and $12,898,261 for Grant 391.

1 In the UPK program, any child may enroll, yet programs are selected to receive UPK funding based on program and child characteristics. The income requirement is for children receiving subsidy money.
2 Hours vary by type of program and setting and are determined locally. UPK grants are required to offer or provide access to full-day and full-year services. For Grant 391, grantees follow the public school calendar which is determined locally.
3 Massachusetts was not able to break its state-funded Head Start enrollment down by single year of age. As a result, this figure is an estimate based on the percentage of federal Head Start enrollees in Massachusetts who were 3 or 4 years old.
4 All teachers must have an Early Childhood Certification. Public school teachers must have a pre-K to grade 2 certification. Nonpublic school teachers must be certified by the Department of Early Education and Care. Teachers must either be 21 years old or have a high school diploma, and must complete a 3-credit college course in child development and development.

1 This is an estimate of children in special education who are not enrolled in state-funded pre-K or Head Start.