Oklahoma began their Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program in 1980, planning to ultimately serve all 4-years-olds in the state. In 1990, the program received statewide funding for 4-year-olds eligible for the federal Head Start program, but local areas could choose to serve additional 4-year-olds through local funds or tuition. In 1998, Oklahoma became the second state in the nation to provide free admission to preschool programs for all 4-year-olds. The program is now available in 99 percent of school districts, and registration in the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program has increased steadily. Since 2004, this program has been assessed for program impact/child outcomes in several studies, including an efficiency study in 2008 and an ongoing longitudinal study by Georgetown University.

Through the state’s school finance formula, public school districts receive funding for the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program. A per-pupil rate, calculated using the age of the child and the length of the program day, is used to repay districts. Districts can support other centers by placing public school teachers in child care centers, Head Start settings, and community-based programs. Children in these sites receive the same services as children in public school locations, and are considered public school enrollees. State budget cuts across the board in education have affected early childhood education programs as well, and subsidy for the state pre-K program is amended proportionally with all other public school grade levels.

In addition, the Pilot Early Childhood Program, started in 2006, was funded in the 2010-2011 school year. Rules and regulations for this program are recognized by the Oklahoma State Board of Education; while funding comes from both public and private foundations. Services are delivered year-round to at-risk children, using annual contracts with the Community Action Project of Tulsa County.

During the 2011 Oklahoma state lawmaking session, the state’s previous Reading Sufficiency Act was updated. New legislation to guarantee that all students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade, focusing on early intervention for children in pre-K, was considered. Specific requirements include showing a series of evaluations, studying literacy instruction from kindergarten through third grade, and offering intensive interventions (including an individualized reading plan and ongoing progress monitoring) to the students identified as having a reading deficit.

Over the next two years, Oklahoma will be revising its pre-K-12 standards for English Language Arts and Math.
OKLAHOMA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUR-YEAR-OLD PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state program enrollment .......................................................... 40,823
School districts that offer state program ........................................... 98%
Income requirement ................................................................. No income requirement
Hours of operation ................................................................. 2.5-6 hours/day, 5 days/week
Operating schedule ................................................................. Academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .............................. 4,256
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ........... 14,365
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY

Early learning standards ............................................................... Comprehensive
Teacher degree ........................................................................... BA
Teacher specialized training ....................................................... EC Certification
Assistant teacher degree ............................................................... HSD or equivalent
Teacher in-service ...................................................................... None
Maximum class size ................................................................. 20 or lower
3-year-olds .............................................................................. NA
4-year-olds .............................................................................. 20
Staff-child ratio .......................................................................... 1:10 or better
3-year-olds .............................................................................. NA
4-year-olds .............................................................................. 1:10
Screening/referral ...................................................................... Vision; hearing; health
and support services ................................................................ and support services
Meals ............................................................................................. Lunch
Monitoring ................................................................................... Site visits

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .......................................................... $149,859,677
Local match required? ............................................................... No
State spending per child enrolled .............................................. $3,671
All reported spending per child enrolled* .................................. $7,678

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

3-YEAR-OLDS

Pre-K: 84%
Head Start: 16%

4-YEAR-OLDS

Pre-K: 76%
Head Start: 13%
Special Ed**: 11%
Other/None

1 Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K.
** Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

RESOURCES

Pre-K*: $7,678
HDST**: $6,653
K-12***: $8,845

SUPPORT SERVICES

Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K.
** Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

Since the 2010-2011 school year, professional development has not been required by the state. As 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. This benchmark has been removed retroactively.

Support services include parent conferences and/or home visits, parent support or training, parent involvement activities, health services for children, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and transition to kindergarten activities. Programs must also offer, or make referrals for, other services including mental health services (counselor), health services (school nurse), and all other typical public school program services (such as early intervention, transition programs, and literacy coaches).

At least one meal is provided through the Federal Child Nutrition Program. This federal program does not provide snacks for students, so snacks are determined locally.