Arizona

State funding for prekindergarten projects began in 1991; these funds were incorporated into a new Early Childhood Block Grant in 1996. Block grant funding may be used for prekindergarten, full-day kindergarten, or supplements for grades K to 3. Schools, Head Start agencies, and private agencies can receive block grant funding to operate prekindergarten programs provided that they meet the accreditation criteria of the National Association for the Education of Young Children or another state-approved accrediting organization. Children must be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch to participate in the prekindergarten program. Nearly all children in the program are age 4.

The Arizona State School Readiness Board was recently established to develop a coordinated delivery system for early childhood programs in the state, focusing on issues such as increasing quality and availability, decreasing duplication of services, and identifying and measuring indicators of school readiness.

A total of 4,162 children were served in 2002–2003, when the program was funded at $19,406,775.

**ACCESS**

State program enrollment: 4,277

**RESOURCES**

Total state Pre-K spending: $19,498,200

Local match required: No

State spending per child enrolled: $4,559

State spending per 3-year-old: NA

State spending per 4-year-old: $255

Data are for the '01–'02 school year, unless otherwise noted.

**QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST**

1. Arizona has 221 districts that offer K–3 programs and would therefore be able to access Pre-K funds.
2. Length of day is determined locally, but a vast majority of programs are half-day, 5 days per week.
3. Operating schedule is determined locally, but most programs operate during the academic year.
4. These figures represent NAEYC requirements. Accredited programs must adhere to the more conservative standard of the national accrediting organization or the Arizona Department of Health child care regulations. In most cases, this means following the standards of the accrediting organization, which is NAEYC for about 90% of providers. Arizona recognizes 5 other accrediting organizations (NECPA, NAC, AMI, ACSI and AMS). All programs receiving state Pre-K funds must be accredited.
5. For the purpose of these calculations, all spending was considered to be directed toward 4-year-olds, since nearly all enrollees are age 4.