Connecticut

In 1997, Connecticut established a community grant program to provide spaces in School Readiness programs for eligible 3- and 4-year-old children in priority school districts and districts with severe-need schools. The initiative was designed to increase the number of spaces in accredited or approved programs (particularly full-day, full-year slots), and to provide increased access to high-quality programs. Each participating community must establish a School Readiness Council—composed of members appointed by the mayor and local school superintendent—which provides recommendations on implementation of the community's program. Accredited or approved programs in public schools, for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, Head Start, and state-funded day care centers may provide slots.

Priority school districts receive an allocation of funds for the School Readiness program while funds for severe-need schools are awarded through a competitive grant process. Grants are distributed to communities based on the utilization of slots. In order to fund a position for the administration, evaluation, and coordination of the grant, each school community may use administrative dollars of up to 5 percent of the grant or $50,000, or 10 percent of the grant up to $75,000 if the community contributes $25,000 in local funding.

All children within priority school districts or severe-need schools are eligible to enroll. Slot types include full-day, full-year; part-day, part-year; and extended-day. At least 60 percent of the slots must be full-day, full-year and 60 percent of the enrolled children must come from families at or below 75 percent of the state median income. Families pay a fee based on a sliding scale, although part-day programs may be exempted by the School Readiness Council from charging fees.

In addition to funding the School Readiness program, Connecticut supplemented federal Head Start funds with $5,100,000 in 2001-2002. The majority of these state funds were used to enhance services to existing Head Start classrooms. However, some of Connecticut's funds were used to accommodate 457 additional slots in 2001-2002.

The number of 3- and 4-year-olds attending School Readiness programs in 2002-2003 was 6,174, with state funding at $35,553,856.