

Florida

NO PROGRAM 2004–2005

In November 2002, Florida’s voters approved a constitutional amendment requiring the establishment of a universal prekindergarten program available to all 4-year-old children whose families choose to participate. Legislation creating the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program was approved in January 2005 and prekindergarten classes began in Fall 2005.

Families participating in the VPK initiative have the option of enrolling their children in a school-year program consisting of 540 instructional hours or a summer program consisting of 300 hours. Programs may not charge parents a fee for the core instructional day, but may charge for wrap-around care. Some requirements for the school-year program and the summer program differ—for example, teachers must have a bachelor’s degree for the summer program, but only a Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent credential for the school-year program.

Families can enroll their children in the program of their choice, as long as the provider is eligible and has space. Eligible providers include licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, accredited nonpublic schools, accredited faith-based providers, and public schools. Public schools may offer a school-year program if the district has been approved by the state Department of Education as having met requirements for reduced class sizes and having sufficient educational facilities and capital outlay funds. Every school district must make summer prekindergarten classes available to all eligible children who wish to participate.

The state also has a broader early childhood initiative, the School Readiness Program. This program distributes federal and state resources to local councils, which determine how funds will be used to support programs and services for young children. The School Readiness Program began in 1999. In 2001, it incorporated two previously existing initiatives—the State Migrant Prekindergarten Program, started in 1978, and the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program, created in 1987.

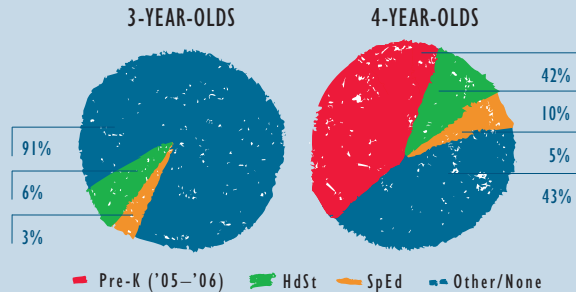
In order to provide a preview of Florida’s new prekindergarten initiative, we present preliminary data from the VPK program for its inaugural school year, 2005–2006. However, these data are not strictly comparable to data for the other state programs, which represent the 2004–2005 program year. Thus, Florida is not included in the ranking sections of this report.



ACCESS '05-'06

Total state program enrollment	-----	89,000 ¹
School districts that offer state program	-----	100% ²
Income requirement	-----	None
Hours of operation	-----	Determined locally
Operating schedule	-----	Determined locally
Special education enrollment '04-'05	-----	18,790
Federally funded Head Start enrollment '03-'04	-----	33,656
State-funded Head Start enrollment	-----	0

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



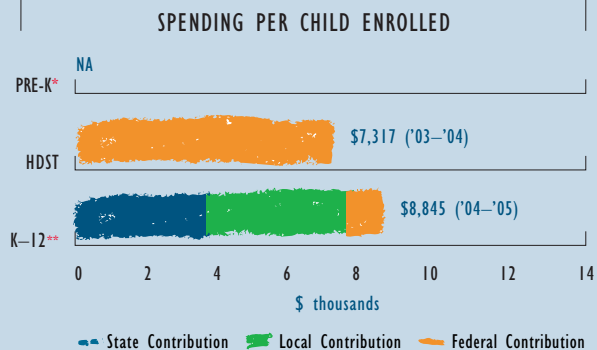
QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST '05-'06

POLICY	STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
Early learning standards	----- Comprehensive	Comprehensive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	----- CDA (school-year), BA (summer)	BA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	----- Meets CDA requirements (school-year); Degree in ECE, EE, or equivalent (summer)	Specializing in Pre-K	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	----- None	CDA or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher in-service	----- None	At least 15 hours/year	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size		20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds	----- NA		
4-year-olds	----- 18		
Staff-child ratio		1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds	----- NA		
4-year-olds	----- 1:10		
Screening/referral and support services	----- None	Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meals	----- None	At least 1/day	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring	----- None	Site visits	<input type="checkbox"/>



RESOURCES '05-'06

Total state Pre-K spending	-----	\$387,137,306 ³
Local match required?	-----	No
State spending per child enrolled	-----	NA
State spending per 3-year-old	-----	\$0
State spending per 4-year-old	-----	\$1,821 ⁴



* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
 ** K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.

¹ This figure represents enrollment in school-year programs as of December 2005.
² Out of 67 total districts, 59 were eligible to offer school-year programs and all 67 were eligible to offer summer programs.
³ This spending figure is an allocated amount intended to support full enrollment in VPK. The actual amount of funding provided to VPK programs was not available.
⁴ This calculation is based on the allocated funding amount.