In response to the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990, the Kentucky Preschool Program was established. All of the state’s 4-year-olds and 3-year-olds with disabilities are eligible to participate in the program. Children who do not meet these eligibility requirements may also participate, but are funded by the district or tuition rather than the state. Eligibility was extended to additional children beginning with the 2006-2007 school year when income eligibility was raised from 130 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 150 percent of FPL.

Funds for the Kentucky Preschool Program are allocated to local school districts through a school funding formula. School districts may contract with private child care centers, Head Start, and special education providers to offer preschool. In 2006-2007, Kentucky increased its biennium budget for state preschool education by $23.5 million, leading to notable increases in per child spending.

In the 2006-2007 school year, the Kentucky Department of Education implemented a process to identify high-quality state-funded preschool classrooms, which are known as Classrooms of Excellence. Preschool teachers must complete a rigorous application process to qualify. This process includes intensive self-study, implementation of the early childhood standards, early childhood certification, and regional or national accreditation.

The Prichard Committee, with funding from Pre-K Now, created the Strong Start initiative in Kentucky during the 2008-2009 school year. This program aims to create public/private partnerships to make high-quality preschool available to all 3- and 4-year-olds from families with incomes up to 200 percent FPL.

Kentucky also passed the Kentucky Student Intervention, the state’s version of Response to Intervention, which includes preschool. This new regulation requires programs to implement relevant, research-based instruction and interventions by qualified personnel.
KENTUCKY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state program enrollment ........................................... 21,485
School districts that offer state program ............................... 100%
Income requirement .......................................................... 150% FPL
Hours of operation ...................................................... 2.5 hours/day, + meal time, 4 or 5 days/week
Operating schedule ...................................................... Academic year
Special education enrollment ........................................... 12,009
Federally funded Head Start enrollment ......................... 14,774
State-funded Head Start enrollment ................................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY

Early learning standards ................................................. Comprehensive
Teacher degree .......................................................... BA
Teacher specialized training ........................................ BA
Assistant teacher degree ............................................ HSD (public); None (nonpublic)
Teacher in-service .................................................... 28 clock hours
Maximum class size .................................................... 20 or lower
Staff-child ratio .......................................................... 1:10 or better
Screening/referral .................................................... Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service
Meals ............................................................... Breakfast or lunch
Monitoring .......................................................... Site visits

BENCHMARK

Comprehensive .......... Comprehensive
BA .......... BA
Specializing in pre-K
CDA or equivalent
At least 15 hours/year
1:10 or better
1:10
Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service
At least 1/day

DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?

☑ ☐ ☑ ☐ ☑ ☐ ☑ ☑

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .............................................. $75,127,000
State spending per child enrolled ..................................... $3,497
All reported spending per child enrolled* ....................... $4,860

* 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.
Data are for the '07-'08 school year, unless otherwise noted.

1 This total includes a supplemental count of 1,136 3-year-olds who received preschool special education services after reaching their third birthday later than December 1. An additional 2,766 children who were not eligible for state funding were served using district funds or tuition; they are not counted here.
2 Because the state pre-K program is interrelated with the state special education program, it is not possible to provide a unique special education enrollment count for Kentucky. The estimates for special education enrollment include some children also counted in the totals for state pre-K.
3 Teachers hired as lead teachers before 2004-2005 can hold a CDA or AA in child development. These teachers are allowed to remain in their current positions but may not transfer to other districts.
4 Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, newly hired assistant teachers in nonpublic settings will be required to have a HSD or GED.
5 Support services include two annual parent conferences or home visits, education services or job training for parents, parenting support or training, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and transition to kindergarten activities.
6 Programs must offer at least one meal. Additional meals and/or snacks are determined locally.