The Kentucky Preschool Program was created in response to the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 to help public schools meet accountability standards. The program is offered to 4-year-olds who are eligible for free lunch, as well as all 3- and 4-year-olds in the state with disabilities. Nearly two-thirds of all participants had special needs in 2003–2004. State funding is distributed directly to all school districts, which may then contract with Head Start, private child care centers, and special education facilities to serve children. Many districts contribute additional funds when state funds are not sufficient. Special education funds from IDEA Part B are blended with preschool funds to serve children with special needs.

State funding for the program remained level from 2004–2005 to 2005–2006, but has decreased since 2001. With an additional 1,000 eligible children in 2005–2006, this results in the lowest per child funding in the history of Kentucky’s preschool program. In some districts, this has led to cuts in hours of service, extra meals, services for children from over-income families, and transportation of Head Start children.

Kentucky has created the Building a Strong Foundation for School Success series, which includes the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, the Kentucky Early Childhood Continuum Assessment Guide, and the Quality Self Study Guide. In 2004–2005, a system was implemented to ensure for the first time that all new teachers hold a bachelor’s degree and the Kentucky early childhood teaching certificate (birth to primary). Also, the state created a new Division of Early Childhood Development within the Department of Education. This division includes the state-funded preschool program, the KIDS NOW initiative and the Head Start collaboration office.
QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY

Early learning standards - Comprehensive
Teacher degree - BA
Teacher specialized training - Interdisciplinary ECE certification
Assistant teacher degree - HSD
Teacher in-service - 4 days for certified teachers; 18 clock hours for CDAs or AAs
Maximum class size
  3-year-olds - 20
  4-year-olds - 20
Staff-child ratio
  3-year-olds - 1:10
  4-year-olds - 1:10
Screening/referral and support services - development; and support services
  Vision, hearing, health, and
Meals - Breakfast or lunch
Monitoring - Other monitoring

BENCHMARK

Comprehensive
BA
Specializing in Pre-K
CDA or equivalent
At least 15 hours/year

DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?

20 or lower
1:10 or better

TOTAL: 8 of 10

RESOURCES

Total state Pre-K spending - $51,600,000
Local match required? - No
State spending per child enrolled - $2,404
State spending per 3-year-old - $2,404
State spending per 4-year-old - $8,480

PRE-K

$3,697

HDST

$6,645 ('03–'04)

K–12

$8,480

$ thousands

STATE CONTRIBUTION

Local Contribution

Federal Contribution

1 Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
2 K–12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.
3 Data are for the '04–'05 school year, unless otherwise noted.

1 Children with disabilities are not required to meet an income requirement.
2 Programs are required to operate for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day plus mealtime; local programs may elect to operate for more than 3 hours. The standard preschool program operates 4 to 5 days per week.
3 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.
4 As of the 2004–2005 program year, the degree and pre-service training requirement for new teachers was changed from a CDA to a BA and early childhood certification.
5 Support services include: two annual parent conferences or home visits, education services or job training for parents, parenting support or training, parent involvement activities, health services for parents and children, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and other services based on local need.