In 1983, the Maine Legislature created the Two-Year Kindergarten initiative, allowing school districts to voluntarily offer early childhood programs to 4-year-old children. Schools involve local providers in the planning process and must obtain program approval from the Department of Education. Districts receive reimbursement through Maine's school funding formula and are eligible to receive a full per pupil subsidy when a minimum of 10 hours per week of programming is offered. In 2005-2006, Maine began providing an additional “weighted” subsidy to supplement the regular per pupil allocation for grades K-2, including programs for 4-year-olds.

About one quarter of the state’s school districts have chosen to offer programs, and the state Department of Education is actively encouraging more districts to offer prekindergarten services for 4-year-olds. While the majority of prekindergarten programs operate in public schools, districts can form partnerships with Head Start and contract with private child care centers or family child care homes to provide services. In 2005, the Two-Year Kindergarten program adopted the State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines to facilitate consistency and collaboration among all components of the state’s system of early care and education. The State Board of Education approved a birth to age 5 teaching endorsement for the 2007-2008 program year.

In addition to providing funds for the Two-Year Kindergarten program, Maine also provided $3,581,018 as a supplement to the federal Head Start program during fiscal year 2006.
Total state program enrollment .............................................. 2,088
School districts that offer state program ................................................................. 27%
Income requirement ................................................................. Determined locally
Hours of operation ................................................................. Determined locally
Operating schedule ................................................................. Determined locally
Special education enrollment .................................................. 2,787
Federally funded Head Start enrollment ............................ 2,882
State-funded Head Start enrollment ................................. 461

State Head Start spending .............................................. $3,581,018
State spending per child enrolled ......................................... $1,793
State spending per 3-year-old ................................................ $0
State spending per 4-year-old ................................................ $278

POLICY STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT BENCHMARK DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?

Early learning standards ................................................... Comprehensive
Teacher degree ................................................................. BA
Teacher specialized training ............................................. Specializing in pre-K
Assistant teacher degree .................................................. 30 credit hours
Teacher in-service .............................................................. 90 clock hours/5 years
Maximum class size .......................................................... 20 or lower
3-year-olds ........................................................................ NA
4-year-olds ........................................................................ No limit
Staff-child ratio ................................................................. 1:10 or better
3-year-olds ........................................................................ NA
4-year-olds ........................................................................ 1:15
Screening/referral .............................................................. Vision, hearing, health; and at least 1 support service
and support services ......................................................... Developmental
Meals ............................................................................... None
Monitoring .......................................................................... None

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .............................................. $3,744,583
Local match required? .......................................................... Yes, tied to school funding formula
State Head Start spending .............................................. $3,581,018
State spending per child enrolled ........................................ $1,793
State spending per 3-year-old ................................................ $0
State spending per 4-year-old ................................................ $278

spending per child enrolled

PRE-K* $3,469
HDST $6,963 (04-05)
K-12** $12,358

1 Many programs operate 2.5 hours per day. A program must operate a minimum of 10 hours per week to receive a per-pupil subsidy through the school funding formula. Programs are expected to operate for 34 weeks per year.
2 Maine was not able to break its state-funded Head Start enrollment down by single year of age. As a result, this figure is an estimate based on the percentage of federal Head Start enrollees in Maine who were 3 or 4 years old.
3 The State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines were adopted in March 2005.
4 The Maine statute pertaining to Basic School Approval and addressing “classroom student-teacher ratios” is intended to guide classroom size. The majority of programs operate with a teacher and educational technician, reducing the ratio to 1:18 or 1:10.
5 The number of annual parent conferences or home visits is determined locally.
6 In addition to Two-Year Kindergarten program funding, Maine delivered $19,898,400 in targeted funds to grades K-2 (including the 4-year-olds in the Two-Year Kindergarten program). It is not possible to estimate the percentage of these funds that are used for serving 4-year-old children.