OVERVIEW
Nebraska preschool enrolled 13,938 children in 2017-2018, an increase of 1,074 children from the prior year. State funding totaled $24,796,908, down $1,118,482 (4%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled $1,779 in 2017-2018, down $235 from 2016-2017, adjusted for inflation. Nebraska met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT’S NEW
Funding for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Program was reduced by two percent in 2017-2018 and four percent in 2018-2019. Legislation was introduced to waive teacher certification for lead teachers. This waiver is in process, but is not finalized yet. Finally, the Nebraska Department of Education was awarded a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five award of over $600,000 in 2018 to support a comprehensive needs assessment and strategic planning for the state’s early childhood programs and services.

BACKGROUND
The Nebraska Early Childhood Education Program began as a pilot program in 1992 and expanded in 2001, providing preschool education for children ages three to five. Direct financial support is available on a competitive basis for public schools and education service units that partner with child care centers, Head Start agencies and/or human services agencies. Grantees are required to match 100% of the funding with local and/or federal sources.

At least 70% of the children in the program must have at least one of the following risk factors: disability or developmental delay, living in a home in which English is not the primary language, eligibility for free- or reduced-price lunch (185% FPL), having teen parents or parents who have not completed high school, or having been born prematurely or with a low birth weight. The program seeks to serve children of diverse social and economic characteristics.

Most programs operate 3.5 to 4 hours per day, four or five days per week and must operate for a minimum of 12 hours per week during the school year. All teachers in the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Program are required to have at least a bachelor’s degree and training in early childhood education. The program monitors child, program, and family outcomes annually.

While the Early Childhood Education Grant Program has expanded, many districts and education service units fund their early childhood programs without the use of grants, yet follow the same regulations as the grant program.
NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment .................................................. 13,938
School districts that offer state program ........................................ 89%
Income requirement .............................................................. 185% FPL
Minimum hours of operation ....................................................... 3.5 hours/day
Operating schedule ............................................................... School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............................... 3,596
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ................. 3,522
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ....................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY NE PRE-K REQUIREMENT BENCHMARK REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive ✓
Curriculum supports Approval process & supports Approval process & supports ✓
Teacher degree BA BA ✓
Teacher specialized training ECE, ECE SpEd Specializing in pre-K ✓
Assistant teacher degree 6 ECE credits by end of 1st year; 12 ECE credits by end of 2nd year CDA or equivalent ✓
Staff professional development 12 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching based on QRIS or Pyramid model For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching □
Maximum class size 20 (3- & 4-year-olds) 20 or lower ✓
Staff-child ratio 1:10 (3- & 4-year-olds) 1:10 or better ✓
Screening & referral Determined locally Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral □
Continuous quality improvement system Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement ✓

For more information about the benchmarks, see the Executive Summary and Roadmap to State Profile Pages.

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending .................................................. $24,796,908
Local match required? ............................................................ Yes
State Head Start spending ....................................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled .............................................. $1,779
All reported spending per child enrolled* ............................... $6,899

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
** Head Start per-child spending includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds.
*** K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE

PRE-K* HDST** K-12***

$ THOUSANDS

State contributions Federal contributions Local contributions TANF spending

Data are for the 2017-2018 school year, unless otherwise noted.