OVERVIEW

Vermont preschool enrolled 8,815 children in 2017-2018, a decrease of 128 children from the prior year. State funding totaled $58,370,955, up $1,601,891 (3%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled $6,622 in 2017-2018, up $274 from 2016-2017, adjusted for inflation. Vermont met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT’S NEW

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and Agency of Human Services (AHS) are in the process of designing a new joint-agency Pre-K Monitoring System. The new monitoring system builds upon existing monitoring systems and procedures to assess the quality of the state’s approved private and public universal pre-K (UPK) programs. The system scales up the State’s focus on components of a high-quality, effective, pre-K education program across the many types of settings in which it is offered.

In addition, continued development for the incorporation of birth through five data sources into the new Vermont Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) was recently completed. The SLDS enhances the ability of the State to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, allows for the analysis of data collected from birth through age 21, and the examination of longitudinal outcomes among children participating in UPK. Also, in 2018, the State of Vermont was awarded $3,363,695 under the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five.

BACKGROUND

Vermont, in 1987, created the Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI), an annual competitive grant program to finance early education opportunities for at-risk 3- to 5-year-olds. In 2007, legislation expanded publicly funded prekindergarten education for 4-year-old children in public schools and private programs and provided funding through the state’s Education Fund, similar to K–12, pro-rated based on a model of 10 hours per week.

In 2014, new legislation, Act 166, required all public school districts to offer UPK for every 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old child not enrolled in kindergarten, for a minimum of 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually. UPK was fully implemented beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, with pre-K provided through school district operated programs and in contractual partnerships with state-approved public and private programs. Funding for Act 166 is a mix of federal, state, and local dollars. Federal funding in 2017-2018 came from various sources, including Vermont’s $33 million, 4-year federal Preschool Expansion Grant.

Act 166 also requires an annual legislative evaluation of the state’s pre-K efforts that includes the number of children and programs participating in UPK, child progress monitoring data, and quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) level information. All Vermont state pre-K programs are required to attain at least four of five stars in Vermont’s QRIS, Step Ahead Recognition Systems (STARS), or hold NAEYC accreditation. STARS requires structured observations of classroom quality using the ECERS or CLASS. Licensed educators with an endorsement in early childhood education and/or early childhood special education are required to be lead teachers in all public school UPK classrooms. For private UPK programs, the licensed educator is required to oversee lead teachers in private UPK classrooms to ensure implementation of UPK education for each child.
VERMONT UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION (ACT 166)

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment ..................................................... 8,815
School districts that offer state program ........................................100%
Income requirement ......................................................... No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation ........................................... 10 hours/week
Operating schedule ......................................................... School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............................ 1,266
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .............. 965
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ......................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>VT PRE-K REQUIREMENT</th>
<th>BENCHMARK</th>
<th>REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early learning &amp; development standards</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher degree</td>
<td>BA (public); BA for lead teacher, AA for classroom teacher (nonpublic)</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>ECE, CD, ECE SpEd (public); Elem. Ed., CD (nonpublic)</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>HSD</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>9 credit hours/5 years (public teachers); 15 hours/year (assistants &amp; nonpublic teachers); PD plans</td>
<td>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size</td>
<td>20 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>1:10 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>1:10 or better</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening &amp; referral</td>
<td>Vision, hearing, health &amp; more</td>
<td>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; &amp; referral</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous quality improvement system</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ..................................................... $58,370,955
Local match required? ......................................................... No
State Head Start spending ..................................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled ......................................... $6,622
All reported spending per child enrolled* .................................. $7,941

* 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.

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

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE

3-YEAR-OLD

4-YEAR-OLD

31%

7%

62%

76%

9%

15%

Pre-K

Head Start†

Special Ed††

Other/None

† Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K.
†† Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>$ THOUSANDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-K</td>
<td>$7,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDST**</td>
<td>$12,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12***</td>
<td>$20,914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 A total of $70,002,759 was used to support the program. Other then federal PDG, Vermont could not break this amount into state, local, and federal spending. NIEER estimated the breakdown based on K-12 spending.