

IMPLEMENTING 15 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K: Hawaii

The Executive Office of Early Learning (EOEL) launched Hawaii’s first publicly funded pre-K program in 2014-2015 with an initial \$3 million investment. EOEL’s Public Pre-Kindergarten Program operates solely in public schools, as mandated by a provision in the Hawaii state constitution barring distribution of public funds to privately run programs.

Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size	Two Adults	Hours/ Dosage	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	PD	Child Assessments	Data Driven	Integrated System
○	○	●	●	●	●	●	—	○	—	ND	●	●	○	—

Key: ● Fully Met ○ Partially Met — Not Met ND Not determined

Political will. Former Gov. Neil Abercrombie (D) campaigned on early learning and was successful in establishing EOEL and housing it temporarily in the governor’s office, creating a state-funded pre-K program, and successfully applying for the federal PDG. His re-election loss in 2014 brought Gov. David Ige (D) into office who is seen as less supportive of early learning. Gov. Ige declined to appoint a Director of EOEL until the office moved, as defined in statute, out of the governor’s office and into an office administratively attached to DOE. Gov. Ige is supportive of public education and has been vocal on wanting preschool state investments to occur in the public schools. His position was one of the factors attributed to the failure of the Constitutional Amendment in November 2014, which asked voters to decide if state funds could be used to fund programs housed in the private sector. As a result of this vote, the state-funded pre-K program is limited to public and public charter schools within the HDOE. The pre-K program has not expanded since its inception, serving 376 children in 2016-2017, 2% of the state’s 4-year-old population. Five new classrooms are planned to open in 2018-2019. Funding has declined to \$2.5 million in 2016-2017, but state per-child spending (\$6,649) ranks 9th out of the 44 states, including D.C. that fund pre-K.

There are several local foundations that support early learning, including Kamehameha Schools, Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, and the Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has supported the Hawaii P-3 Initiative and several smaller projects, but the large P-3 grants (over \$11 million) are almost complete.

Compelling vision and strong leadership. Hawaii's Department of Education (HIDOE) is the only statewide public education system in the country comprising only one school district. In July of 2015, the EOEL became attached to HIDOE for administrative purposes only; at this time the EOEL is not considered a part of the HIDOE, despite all of the pre-K classrooms being located within public schools, as mandated by a provision in the Hawaii state constitution that bars distribution of public funds to privately run programs. While EOEL is charged with coordinating the early learning system, it is only responsible for pre-K. Hawaii received a federal PDG grant in 2014 for \$14.5 million, however, it was awarded to the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission. EOEL has seven FTEs that support pre-K including one Educational Specialist responsible for administration of the program and six Resource Teacher positions that provide mentoring/coaching support to each of the schools.

Education and compensation. Teachers in the EOEL Public Pre-K Program are part of the teacher's union, the Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA), and, as such, are granted parity with teachers in K-12 grades. Lead teachers in the Public Pre-K Program are required to have a BA. EOEL has worked with the Hawaii Teacher Standards Board to change licensure requirements relating to early childhood education. Starting January 1, 2019, any individual adding the fields of Early Childhood Education (ECE) PK-3 and ECE PK-K to an existing Hawaii teaching license must complete 30-36 credit hours from a state-approved teacher preparation program in ECE.

Adult-child ratio and two adults in the classroom. Hawaii has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10.

Learning time. Although there is no minimum requirement specifically stated in statute, the understanding is that the publicly funded pre-K program will run on the same calendar and schedule as the DOE public elementary school in which the classrooms are housed. This is the equivalent of 30.5 hours per week.

Age-appropriate learning standards. The Hawaii Early Learning and Development Standards (HELDS) are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, which include college- and career-readiness standards. Although it's not currently mandated, the Hawaii Early Learning and Development Standards are aligned with the assessments used in pre-K. The state supports their implementation through the coaching program in which all teachers are required to participate.

System that ensures effective curriculum. The EOEL does not endorse any one preschool curriculum. Curriculum decisions are currently made by the principal and teachers at most sites, and by principals alone in a few sites. Some programs use Creative Curriculum and supplement with literacy and math curriculum used in the kindergarten. While there is not a specified requirement for implementing the curricula with fidelity, teachers receive on-going training and feedback on implementing an emergent curriculum and inquiry/project-work approach through the required coaching program.

Support for students with special needs. In 2016-2017, 19 children (5%) of EOEL's pre-K program received special education services. To support the pre-K teachers in meeting these children, professional development is offered to the teachers.

Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL). Statute specifies that English language learners are among EOEL Public Pre-Kindergarten Program's enrollment priorities. Teachers are not required to



possess certification of training to support working with DLLs. In 2016-2017, 11% of the pre-K children were classified as DLLs.

High quality teaching. CLASS or ECERS scores were not able to be reviewed.

Professional development. Although there is no state requirement, the HSTA union contract requires 21 hours of teacher in-service professional development. For EOEL Prekindergarten teachers, at least 60 hours of professional development in Early Childhood Education are offered to teachers per year in addition to the required 21 hours. Coaching and mentoring support is provided to teachers and assistant teachers. The frequency of coaching and mentoring is dependent upon the skill of the individual teacher and assistant teacher based on self-reporting as well as the CLASS assessment. Experienced teachers may receive coaching and/or mentoring once or twice a month while those needing more support may receive coaching/mentoring once or twice per week. On the average, each coach is assigned to work with four to six lead teachers.

Child Assessments. Although it's not currently mandated, the HELDS are aligned with the assessments used in the EOEL Pre-Kindergarten Program. All classrooms must use Teaching Strategies GOLD multiple times during the year to adjust curricula, track child and program level outcomes over time, and provide a measure of kindergarten readiness. To support the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD, the state offers training and provides technical assistance through workshops and the coaches.

Data-driven decision-making. CLASS observations are conducted twice a year in all EOEL classrooms and although HDOE does not require it, EOEL has established a system for providing teachers with feedback. CLASS observers must be certified and maintain certification on an annual basis. Data that are collected during monitoring are used at the state level to identify needs that will guide teacher training, professional development, or technical assistance support; create program improvement plans; make funding decisions; make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program; and target funding for quality improvement efforts. There has not been an evaluation of the pre-K program.

Integrated System. The HELDS are loosely integrated in the other components of the pre-K program. In addition, EOEL is not able to align or fully integrate its program with other departments, such as HDOE and the Hawaii State Charter School Commission, or the private providers through the constitutional barrier, thus inhibiting the ability to create a more integrated system.