

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

The Ohio Public Preschool Program was officially established in 1990, after four years as a pilot program. In 2013-2014, the eligible providers for this program expanded from school districts to include highly rated child care providers and chartered nonpublic schools. The state has worked to remove barriers to funding, so all types of programs have access to both public preschool and child care funds. This scan focuses on the Ohio Department of Education (ODE)’s publicly funded preschool program, the Ohio Early Childhood Education (ECE) program, which does not include the publicly funded preschool programs in child care or Head Start (where more than 38,000 preschool-aged children are served in highly rated programs).

Since 2006-2007, grants have been awarded based upon a poverty index. With new funds added in 2016-2017, grants were awarded to high-quality preschool programs located within district boundaries that have high needs (i.e., high poverty and low achievement). Ohio expanded its eligible providers to also include public districts, chartered nonpublic districts, charter schools, and child care programs. Ohio has a total of 390 grantees.

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. There is broad support for preschool in Ohio, but funding and enrollment remain quite limited for a state of Ohio’s size. In 2012, Governor John Kasich (R) said in his 2015 State of the State Address that the state is aiming for funding 17,000 preschool slots for kids who “will be better prepared for school.” In 2014-2015, the state added \$11.2 million on top of the \$10 million added in 2013-2014, for a total of \$21.2 million in the 2014-2015 state biennium. This increases the number of ECE funded children from 8,150 in 2013-2014 to a total of 11,090 funded children in 2014-2015. In 2016-2017, this number increased by 8% to 15,942 children. Despite the increase, this leaves enrollment of 4-year-olds at roughly 11% of the population.

The Ohio Business Roundtable (BRT) has been a leader on early childhood policy. It supported the creation of the early childhood position in the Governor's office, the development of the new kindergarten readiness assessment, and the successful RTT-ELC grant application. A number of foundations have also supported pre-K efforts including Cleveland PRE4CLE, Success by 6 in Cincinnati, The Raymond John Wean Foundation, and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. A number of city-led efforts have sprouted up in recent years, including programs in Cleveland and Columbus.

Compelling vision and strong leadership. Pre-K is administered through the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness housed within ODE. Child care and the state's QRIS is in the Department of Job and Family Services. However, the teams work together progressing towards alignment between the programs. Three FTEs are responsible for administering the pre-K programs.

Education and compensation. Ohio does not require lead teachers to have a BA although they do require early childhood specialization. In the QRIS, programs earn more points for meeting a higher education requirement. There are no salary parity policies for pre-K teachers.

Adult-child ratio and two adults in the classroom. Maximum class size for 3-year-olds is 24 and for 4-year-olds it is 28, ratios are 1:12 and 1:14 respectively. All programs are required to participate in Ohio's QRIS, Step Up To Quality (SUTQ), and are given additional points for meeting a 1:10 staff-to-child ratio or maximum class size of 20.

Learning time. The Early Childhood Education Grants (ECE) program funds a half-day program, 12.5 hours per week. House Bill 64 (2015) allows preschools to extend the day using publicly funded child care dollars for children who are eligible at or below 130% FPL.

Age-appropriate learning standards. Ohio's two sets of standards, the Early Learning and Development Standards (OELDS), revised in 2011; and the Ohio's Early Learning Program Standards (OELPS) revised in 2009; are comprehensive and aligned with the Ohio Learning Standards (K-12 Standards), including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The state provides professional development opportunities to support the use of OELDS and the Birth Through Kindergarten Entry Implementation Guides provides implementation support for them.

System that ensures effective curriculum. Programs are required to adopt a curriculum but the decision on which curriculum to use is determined locally. The state requires the curriculum be research-based and aligned to the OELDS. Review of the curricula in use is part of the monitoring process. There is not a system to ensure that curriculum is implemented with fidelity.

Support for students with special needs. In 2016-2017, 14.4% of the pre-K students were identified as having special needs. Preschool teachers are required to possess specific qualifications and participate in PD on working with children with special needs. State Support Teams are available regionally to support programs.

Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL). Ohio is not able to report the number of DLLs enrolled in its pre-K programs, nor does the state have policies to regulate services for preschool DLLs.

High quality teaching. Currently ECERS or ELLCO data were not able to be reviewed.

Professional development. Teachers are required to complete 20 hours of PD every two years. Programs are now required to participate in the state's QRIS, Step Up to Quality (SUTQ); and are given extra points for attaining 30 hours of PD every two years at the star four and five levels. State policy does not require ongoing classroom-embedded support to be provided to teachers.

Child Assessments. ODE and the Department of Job and Family Services are jointly implementing the state developed Early Learning Assessment, a pre-K-through kindergarten formative assessment, covering ages 36 to 72 months, which is aligned with the OELDS. Implementation began in 2015. Data are used to track child and program level outcomes over time; adjust curricula; guide teacher training; and make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program. The state provide provides resources and PD opportunities for both administrators and teachers to understand how to use the assessment.

Data-driven decision-making. All pre-K programs are observed annually using the Ohio Classroom Observation Tool, however the state does not receive the results of the observations. Pre-K programs are now required to be in the SUTQ and be at a level 3. Through SUTQ, programs are observed periodically, and the teachers receive feedback as part of the process. The teachers, the classrooms and the program also complete an annual self-assessment. These observations are collected and used to create goals and are identify professional development training needs.

The ECE program has been evaluated for process quality using ELLCO, with various stages completed in 2009, 2011, and 2012.

Integrated System. Child assessments and the state's OELDS are integrated into not only pre-K, but also the early childhood system. However, professional development and curriculum are not as strongly supported by the state's system. With the requirement of all programs participating in SUTQ, more data may be available at the state level, but without that information, the state has minimal program quality information.

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