

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

Established in 1987, the Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OHSP) program provides comprehensive child and family development services for 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families. In 1992, a state-federal partnership was formalized between the Region X Office of Head Start and the Oregon Department of Education to support a collaborative Head Start and state prekindergarten system, which later expanded to serve additional Head Start-eligible children. To provide state funding for the program, general fund dollars are allocated on a biennial basis by the state legislature. OHSP program funding is available to nonsectarian private and public organizations not receiving federal Head Start funding, including public schools, private agencies, community action agencies, government agencies, and colleges and universities.

Beginning in fall 2016, Oregon began an additional state-funded preschool program called Preschool Promise which is overseen by the Early Learning Division. This program was created via new legislation and funding to develop and implement a mixed-delivery preschool program for children from families with incomes up to 200% of federal poverty level. The mixed-delivery model is based on the assumption that high-quality learning experiences can take place in a wide variety of settings, and families should be able to choose the setting that works best for them and their children. In the first year of implementation, the program was funded to serve 1,300 3- and 4-year-old children. Funding for Preschool Promise goes directly to Early Learning Hubs which can then subcontract with public schools, child care, Head Start, Relief Nurseries, Education Service Districts, and other community-based organizations.

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.

Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OHSP)

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

Preschool Promise

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Political will. Gov. Kate Brown (D) has been a supporter of early learning initiatives and was vocal in her support of House Bill 3380 (2015) which provided a blueprint to make quality early learning opportunities available to more children from low-income families. The bill provides funding for children from families with incomes at or below 200% FPL, allows a mix of programs to apply for state funding, and created Preschool Promise. There is legislative movement to increase education level requirements for lead and assistant teachers and improve quality improvement efforts through coaching, job embedded professional opportunities, and CLASS observations.

In 2016-2017, Oregon enrolled 9,456 children in its two pre-K programs, an increase of 1,616 students (21%) from the previous year. In addition to a substantial increase in enrollment, state pre-K spending increased by more than 27%. Per-child state spending was \$9,533 per child, ranking third out of 43 states, D.C. and Guam operating pre-K programs.

The Children’s Institute in Oregon has convened a bipartisan coalition of business and community leaders, including former elected officials to champion for early learning.

Compelling vision and strong leadership. The Early Learning Division administers both pre-K programs and is housed within the Department of Education (DOE), but the DOE does not have authority over the Early Learning Division. The director of the Early Learning Division is appointed by and reports to the governor. There have been some recent leadership changes within the Early Learning Division, but the staff has expanded to 3 FTEs who are responsible for the two pre-K programs.

The Early Learning Division works closely with its Early Learning Council (ELC) that has the authority to set minimum and target salary requirements for teachers. HB 3380 directs the ELC to identify resources to develop, support and sustain the preschool program, including evaluation, professional development opportunities, technical assistance, monitoring and guidance to ensure pathways and supports to increase culturally and linguistically diverse preschool staff. The ELC also makes the final decision on the selection of the Early Learning Hubs (Hubs), the applicants and recipients of Preschool Promise funds. Hubs are intermediaries between the state and providers, created to ensure fiscal and specified performance metric accountability of providers. Hubs are responsible for developing a community plan and identifying providers within their community that fit within that plan. The Early Learning Division is expected to provide technical assistance to Hubs and preschool providers to ensure continuous quality improvement, as well as collecting, aggregating, and reporting on data from the preschool programs.

Education and compensation.

OHSP: Under the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, all lead teachers were required to have at least an AA by October 2011; by September 30, 2013, 50% must have earned at least a BA. Some programs have participated in local partnerships (e.g., school districts) where BA-level degrees and early childhood licensure with or without special education are required as locally determined. Teacher licensure options for public schools include Birth-3rd grade and Pre-K-K (Birth-K). There are no salary parity policies for OHSP teachers.

Preschool Promise: Lead teachers are required to have a BA in ECE or a related field but waivers for this requirement are permitted as long as the teacher has submitted a plan to attain a BA and is demonstrating progress towards the BA degree. Approximately 50% of lead teachers have requested a waiver for the BA requirement (minimum requirement is a CDA).

Adult-child ratio and two adults in the classroom.

OHSP: OHSP has a maximum class size of 20 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:10. Maximum class size for 3-year-olds is 17 and staff-child ratio of 2:17.

Preschool Promise: The staff-child ratio is based on the Oregon Child Care Licensing regulations. Preschool Promise providers must obtain a rating in the top two-tiers in the Oregon Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). The top two tiers require a class size of less than 20 and/or a staff-child ratio greater than 1:10.

Learning time.

OHSP: Most programs operate 3.5 to four hours per day for a school year using state funding. Minimum required contact time is determined by the classroom hours combined with home-visit hours offered. School- and extended-day programs (more than six hours) are generally supported with other funding.

Preschool Promise: Providers must offer at minimum 900 hours of service in a program year (July 1-June 30). Programs operate on the same schedule as kindergarten programs and most operate on a school-day, school-year schedule.

Age-appropriate learning standards. The Oregon Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines (2016), coupled with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, guide both of Oregon's pre-K programs. Together they are comprehensive and aligned with the state's K-3 standards. The state provides professional development opportunities to support use of both of the ELDS. For OHSP, additional resources are provided to programs.

System that ensures effective curriculum.

OHSP: The state provides training, TA, funding, and additional materials to support curriculum implementation. There is not a state approved or recommended list of curricula, nor is there a system to ensure that curricula are implemented with fidelity.

Preschool Promise: For this program, there is a state approved/recommended list of curricula (Creative Curriculum; HighScope; Opening the World of Learning (OWL)). Curricula must also be

aligned with the ELDS. The state provides additional funding to support curriculum implementation.

Support for students with special needs.

OHSP: In 2016-2017, 17.6% of OHSP students were identified as having special needs. Inclusion specialists are available to support preschool teachers and/or children.

Preschool Promise: The number of children who had special needs in 2016-2017 was not able to be reported. Early Education/Early Childhood Special Education providers utilize a consultation model of support for teachers who are serving children with identified special needs in their classroom.

Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL).

OHSP: In 2016-2017, 24% of the OHSP children were identified as DLLs. OHSP follows the Head Start Performance Standards (HSPS), which include the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. Programs are required to develop procedures for identifying children who are limited English proficient, ensure that children make progress toward acquiring English through culturally and linguistically appropriate instructional services, and inform parents of such children about instructional services used. If 50% or more of children speak a language other than English, programs must ensure that non-English speaking children are provided language support as needed. Otherwise, DLL/ELL policies related to immersion, instruction, summer language programs, translators/bilingual staff, professional development or coaching provided to teachers of ELL/DLLs are locally determined.

Preschool Promise: The program offers monolingual and bilingual Spanish classes as well as a Burmese and a Somali language program.

High quality teaching. CLASS data are not available for review for either program.

Professional development.

OHSP: Teachers are required to complete 15 clock hours of PD per year. The updated HSPS require all teachers to have annual professional development plans and ongoing classroom-embedded support to be provided to teachers.

Preschool Promise: Teachers are required to receive 20 to 24 hours of training and/or equivalent college course credits annually to maintain the providers top two-tier rating in the QRIS. If teachers and/or assistant teachers do not meet the minimum education requirements, then a professional development plan is required. Preschool Promise providers are connected to a Quality Improvement Specialist to support continuous quality improvement related to QRIS standards. Some of the support does include job-embedded professional development opportunities. Coaching is not yet provided systematically but the program is working toward this goal.

Child Assessments.

OHSP: State policy requires all OHSP programs use Teaching Strategies GOLD throughout the year. Data are used to guide teacher training, professional development, or technical assistance;

adjust curricula; to track child and program level outcomes over time; to make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program; and to provide a measure of kindergarten readiness.

Preschool Promise: The state QRIS has an approved list of child assessments that includes both Teaching Strategies GOLD and the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS). If a provider chooses to use a different assessment tool, it has to be aligned with the ELDS and approved by QRIS evaluators. Child assessments are required, at minimum, to be used at least three times in the program year. Data are used to adjust curricula; to track child and program level outcomes over time; to make changes to state policies regarding the preschool program; to provide a measure of kindergarten readiness; and to provide formative information so that teachers can individualize instruction to meet their students' needs.

Data-driven decision-making.

OHSP: No formal evaluation has been conducted of the OHSP to date. Program quality is monitored by the Early Learning Division through ongoing communication with grantees and the Regional Office of Head Start. Evaluations are conducted on site for every grantee every three years, either through ODE and/or the Office of Head Start, though additional site visits are conducted as needed. Regardless of funding source, all children enrolled in the OHSP programs receive unique identifier numbers so that children's developmental progress can be followed as they enter the K-12 system.

Per the HSPS, programs are required to use CLASS for program improvement, but the policy does not specify frequency of the assessments. The state does not receive the results of the observations. All OHSP programs are required to participate in QRIS, but they are not required to achieve a certain quality rating level.

Preschool Promise: The use of structured classroom observations was determined locally in 2016-2017, the first year of implementation. During the 2017-2018 program year, all sites will be assessed using CLASS. The data will be used by various stakeholder groups to support continuous quality improvement efforts. For subsequent years of implementation, requirements are being established.

All Preschool Promise programs are required to participate in QRIS and be at the top two-tiers (Level 4 or 5). However, programs may request a limited duration waiver for this requirement while they build capacity.

Integrated System. Currently, integration of the pre-K system is being developed, in part due to the newness of the Preschool Promise program. Selection and implementation of curriculum and child assessments are not fully supported by, nor used to inform, the professional development system. Structured classroom observation data are not consistently being collected and shared with the state.