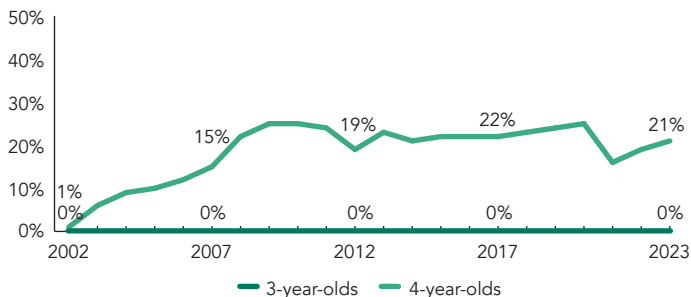
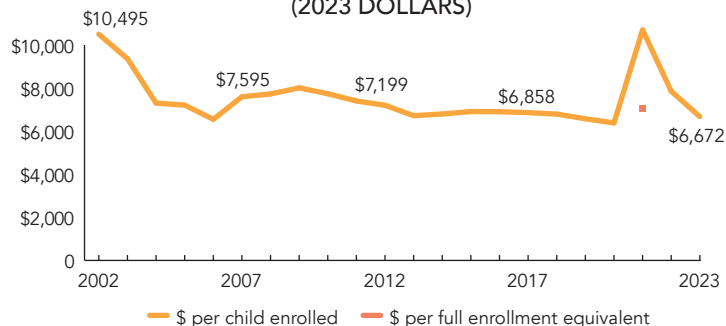


North Carolina

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2023 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2022-2023 school year, North Carolina preschool enrolled 25,684 children, an increase of 2,005 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$96,578,574 and an additional \$68,244,128 in TANF funds and \$6,537,337 in federal recovery funds supported the program, down \$14,517,388 (8%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled \$6,672 in 2022-2023, down \$1,178 from 2021-2022, adjusted for inflation. North Carolina met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

The 2023-2025 State Budget passed by the legislature and which the Governor allowed to become law without signing (Session Law 2023-134) included a provision to increase NC Pre-K staff-to-child ratios. Specifically, beginning in October 2023, staff-to-child ratios will increase from one to nine with a maximum class size of 18 to one to 10 with a maximum class size of 20 children, with at least one teacher and one teacher assistant per classroom. A classroom of 10 children or less shall have at least one teacher. The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education did not support this provision because: (1) NC Pre-K is specifically designed to serve the most at risk children, including those with developmental and/or educational challenges. Increasing staff-to-child ratios may have a negative impact on classroom quality due to increased demand on teaching staff, decreased ability to provide focused one-on-one support to all children, and increased likelihood for behavioral challenges in the classroom and (2) Without additional funding for the NC Pre-K program to increase funds and slots at the county level, increasing staff-to-child ratios will lead to local level disruptions/disparities (e.g., increasing capacity at one site could result in decreasing capacity at another site).

BACKGROUND

North Carolina has provided state-funded pre-kindergarten education since 2001, originally via the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program. During the 2011-2012 school year, the program was renamed the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program, and administrative control moved from the Department of Public Instruction to the Department of Health and Human Services. NC Pre-K enrolls at-risk 4-year-olds from low-income families who have not participated in other early childhood programs. NC Pre-K programs are required to operate 6.5 hours per day for 36 weeks each year and serve as many eligible children as funding levels permit. Eligibility generally requires children to be in a household with income at or below 75% SMI, but up to 20% of children may be in a household with a higher income if they have another designated risk factor. Risk factors include a developmental delay or identified disability, a chronic health condition, or limited English proficiency.

Funding for NC Pre-K includes state general appropriations and North Carolina Education Lottery receipts, federal funds, and a local contribution, with the majority of funding from the state. NC Pre-K classrooms operate statewide in settings such as privately licensed Head Start programs, childcare centers, and public schools. All programs, whether in public or private settings, must earn high-quality ratings under the state child-care licensing system to participate in NC Pre-K and the state's subsidy system. NC Pre-K sets a maximum class size of eighteen 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:9. Lead teachers must have a bachelor's degree and hold or be working towards a birth-through-kindergarten license. Classroom staff are required to use approved curricula and formative assessments aligned with the state's early learning standards. Staff conduct ongoing formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction.

ACCESS RANKINGS	
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS
29	None Served

RESOURCE RANKINGS	
STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING
20	23

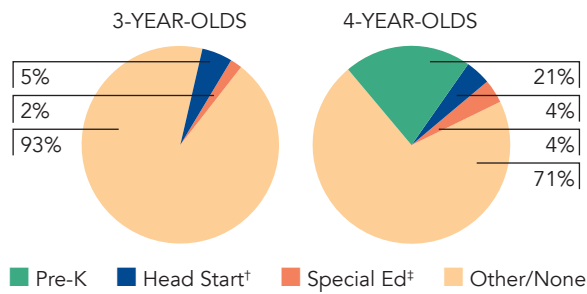
TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
9*

NORTH CAROLINA PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	25,684
School districts that offer state program	99% (counties)
Income requirement	75% SMI
Minimum hours of operation	6.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4	10,321
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	14,220
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	0

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE



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

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY	NC PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports	Approval process & supports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	BA	BA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *
Teacher specialized training	ECE, CD	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	CDA or AA in ECE or CD	CDA or equivalent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	5-20 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	18 (4-year-olds)	20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:9 (4-year-olds)	1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health & more	Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

9*

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

* Indicates that while policy meets the benchmark, it is not being implemented fully.

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$171,360,040
Local match required?	No
State Head Start spending	\$0
State spending per child enrolled	\$6,672
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$8,504

* 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.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

