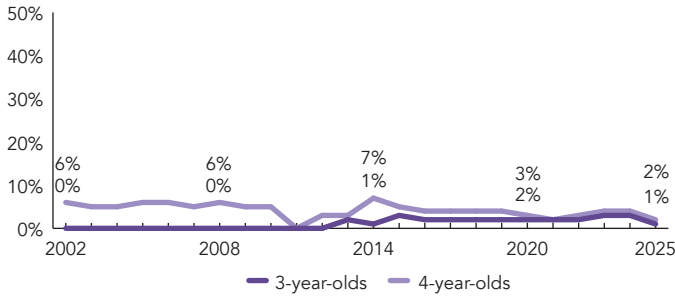
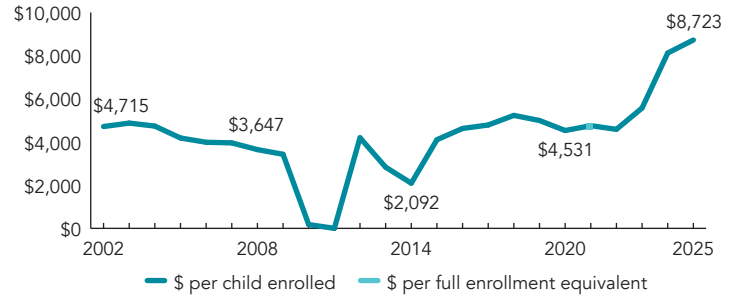


Arizona

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, Arizona preschool enrolled 3,081 children, a decrease of 3,242 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$21,794,604, and an additional \$5,080,674 in federal recovery funds supported the program, down \$24,464,419 (48%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child (including federal recovery funds) equaled \$8,723 in 2024-2025, up \$603 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. Arizona met 3 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

Federal COVID-19 relief funds were used to support Quality First (QF) Scholarships by increasing reimbursement rates to the cost of quality, increasing the eligibility threshold to 300% FPL, as well as increasing the number of scholarships available. The First Things First (FTF) Board approved the maintenance of the increased reimbursement rate for QF Scholarships starting in state fiscal year 2025, which began July 1, 2024. While the increase is positive, it negatively impacted enrollment. Tobacco revenue, the state funding source for QF Scholarships, has been declining and may impact future state funding. The state recently invested \$45M in state general funds to support the state subsidy system, the Department of Economic Security Child Care Assistance Program.

In December 2025, Arizona was awarded a federal PDG B-5 Systems Building Grant totaling \$8,428,558, when added to the existing PDG B-5 award, brought the new total amount to \$50.4 million. These funds will be used to support system building and strengthen ECE programs in a mixed-delivery system, improve system efficiency and collaboration, and raise the overall quality of programs.

BACKGROUND

Arizona began funding preschool programs in 1991 along with supplemental services for preschool, full-day kindergarten, and first through third grade education supported by the federal Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) from 1996 until 2010 when that funding ended.

In 2006, Arizona voters earmarked certain tobacco tax revenues for early childhood development and health programs, and created the Early Childhood Development and Health Board, known as First Things First (FTF), to oversee those funds. FTF allocates funds to communities based on the birth to age 5 population and percentage of young children in poverty. Volunteer regional councils recommend early childhood strategies to fund, including QF Scholarships serving children birth to age 5 (before kindergarten) living at or below 300% FPL. Programs are eligible to receive QF Scholarships as long as they participate in QIRS and have met at least a three-star rating on the QIRS quality standards. During 2023-2024, the QIRS model was revised so that quality improvement supports are more individualized to the needs of the participating programs. Lower-rated programs receive more supports, while higher-rated programs receive fewer supports. QF Scholarship reimbursement rates vary by age of child (infants, toddlers, preschoolers).

Dramatic decreases in tobacco tax revenues have resulted in a \$76.2 million drop in annual revenues as of SFY25 (46.2% less than the baseline year of 2008). Despite ongoing decreases in tobacco revenue, FTF's commitment to QF Scholarships has grown, increasing from \$35 million in FY16 to \$45.2 million in FY25 in all settings (center-based and home-based) and for all ages birth through 5 (before kindergarten). FTF collaborates with the state to meet federal match requirements and preserve about \$47 million per year in federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funds. In the 13 years this partnership has been in place, Arizona has been able to leverage \$605.7 million in federal subsidy dollars that otherwise would have been lost.

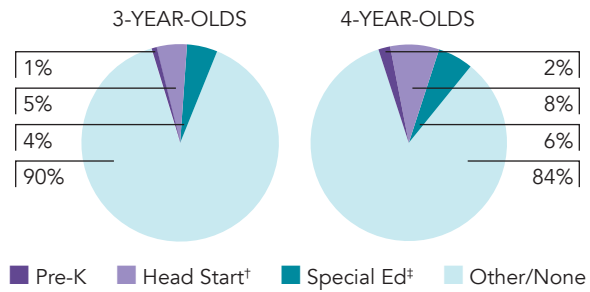
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
45	30	14	25	3

QUALITY FIRST SCHOLARSHIPS

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment.....	3,081
School districts that offer state program.....	79% (Regional Partnership Councils)
Income requirement.....	300% FPL
Minimum hours of operation.....	34 hours/month
Operating schedule.....	Determined locally
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4.....	9,409
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4.....	10,344
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4.....	0

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE



† 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.

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY	AZ 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	HSD	BA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	None	Specializing in pre-K	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	None	CDA or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	18 hours/year	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	26 (3-year-olds); 30 (4-year-olds)	20 or lower	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:13 (3-year-olds); 1:15 (4-year-olds)	1:10 or better	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Immunizations	Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral	<input 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"/>

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

3

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending.....	\$26,875,278
Local match required?.....	No
State Head Start spending.....	\$0
State spending per child enrolled.....	\$8,723
All reported spending per child enrolled*.....	\$8,723

* 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

