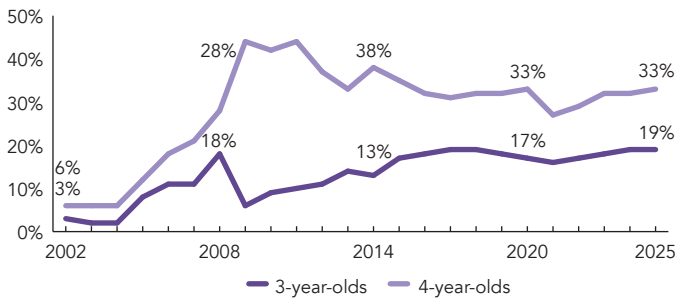
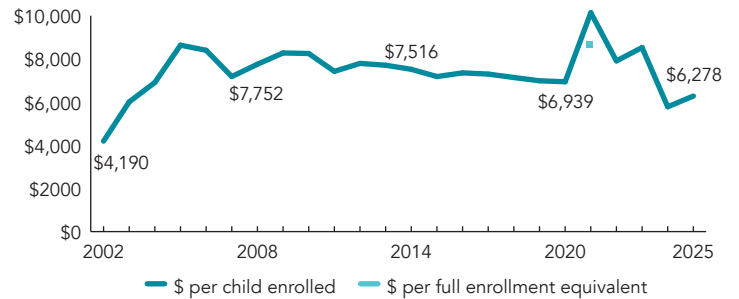


# Arkansas

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



## OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, Arkansas preschool enrolled 20,327 children, an increase of 16 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$106,072,095 and an additional \$7,500,000 in TANF funds and \$14,045,035 in federal recovery funds supported the program, up \$10,203,845 (9%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child (including TANF and federal recovery funds) equaled \$6,278 in 2024-2025, up \$497 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. Arkansas met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

## WHAT'S NEW

In 2025, Act 504 (Expansion of Arkansas Better Chance Early Childhood Eligibility) merged Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) and Arkansas Better Chance School Success, allowing all ABC programs to serve infants and toddlers. This new legislation will also allow for more child qualifying factors for all programs. Previously, all Arkansas Better Chance for School Success recipients could only use age and income when qualifying children and families. Now all ABC programs can qualify children with the following characteristics: family has gross income not exceeding 200% FPL; parents without a high school diploma or GED; low birth weight (below 5 lbs., 9 oz); parent is under 18 years of age at child's birth; immediate family member has a history of substance abuse and or addiction; has a demonstrable developmental delay as identified through screening; eligible for services under IDEA; income eligible for Title I programs; limited English proficiency; or parent has history of abuse of neglect or is a victim of abuse or neglect.

Additionally, in December 2025, Arkansas was awarded a federal PDG B-5 Systems Building Grant totaling \$14,751,000 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

The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program began in 1991 as part of a statewide education reform initiative, with funding (\$10 million) earmarked to serve children birth to 5 years old based on family income, developmental, and/or economic risk factors. In 2003, legislation known as Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) set priorities for funding, supporting 3- and 4-year-olds in households with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level. School districts with 75% or more of their students scoring below proficient in literacy and math on the State Assessment, and children in schools designated as "school improvement status" receive prioritized funding.

ABC/ABCSS components intended to ensure quality include: one teacher with at least a bachelor's degree per every three classrooms at a site and teachers with an associate degree in the other two classrooms; teacher assistants/paraprofessionals with a minimum of a CDA or equivalent; low teacher-to-child ratios (1:10); health and development screenings; parent involvement and community engagement; statewide child assessment (Work Sampling); an approved list of curriculum aligned with the 2016 Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards; and classroom quality observations to inform technical assistance; and an evaluation of child outcomes through a longitudinal study.

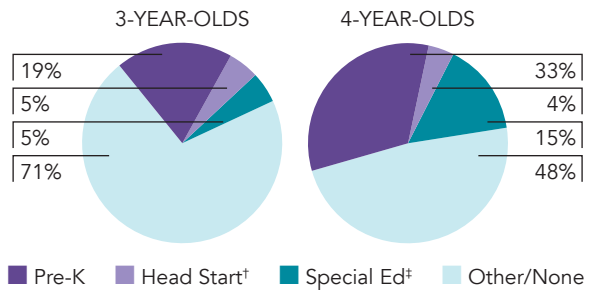
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
24	8	26	19	8

# ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE/ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

## ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment .....	20,327
School districts that offer state program .....	100% (counties)
Income requirement .....	200% FPL
Minimum hours of operation .....	7 hours/day
Operating schedule .....	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	9,662
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .....	3,471
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	AR PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	<b>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports	<b>Approval process &amp; supports</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	One BA per 3 classrooms; AA for other 2 classrooms	<b>BA</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	ECE, CD, ECE SpEd	<b>Specializing in pre-K</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	CDA	<b>CDA or equivalent</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	30 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching for novice teachers	<b>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	20 (3- & 4-year-olds)	<b>20 or lower</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:10 (3- & 4-year-olds)	<b>1:10 or better</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health & more	<b>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; &amp; referral</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement	<b>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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



## RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .....	\$127,617,130
Local match required? .....	Yes
State Head Start spending .....	\$0
State spending per child enrolled .....	\$6,278
All reported spending per child enrolled* .....	\$10,637

\* 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

