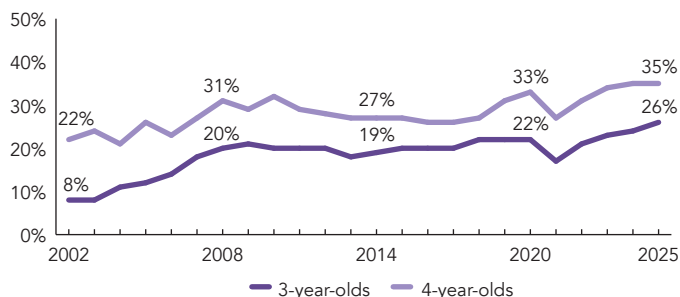
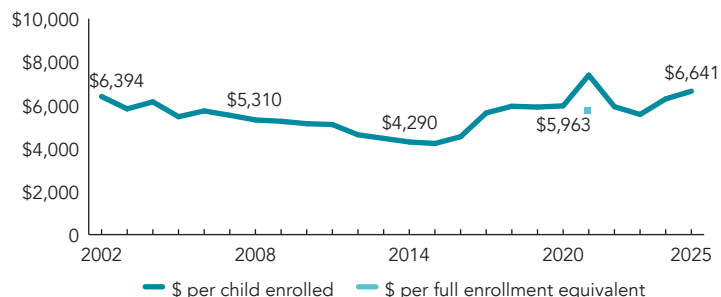


Illinois

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, Illinois preschool enrolled 83,661 children, an increase of 1,187 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$555,609,751, up \$37,242,858 (7%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled \$6,641 in 2024-2025, up \$356 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. Illinois met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

The Illinois General Assembly allocated an additional \$75 million for the Early Childhood Block Grant in FY25. This included expanded services for children birth to three years to serve an additional 512 children in center-based care. For preschool, 5,150 preschool seats were awarded in preschool deserts, and across FY24 and FY25, Smart Start added a total of 11,000 preschool seats across the state.

For FY26, the General Assembly allocated level funding to the Early Childhood Block Grant, and a statewide competition for additional Smart Start Initiative seats was not released. For FY27, the Early Childhood Block grant will be under a unified agency, the Illinois Department of Early Childhood. The Illinois State Board of Education is currently working with the new department to ensure the administration will be seamless for providers, parents, and children.

BACKGROUND

The Illinois Prekindergarten Program for At-Risk Children was founded in 1985. The Illinois Preschool for All (PFA) initiative began in 2006 with the goal of providing pre-K to all 3- and 4-year-olds by 2012. Starting in 2017, the PFA Expansion Program began when the State was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant. The Illinois PFA and PFA Expansion programs are now combined to operate in almost all counties. Funding for Preschool for All is awarded on a competitive basis to public schools, private childcare, Head Start, faith-based centers, higher education institutions, and regional offices of education.

Preschool for All programs are required to provide instruction in children's home language if there are 20 or more English Language Learners (ELLs) with the same home language enrolled in a program. All pre-K teachers are required to meet bilingual education certification requirements. Language of instruction is determined locally if there are fewer than 20 ELLs with the same home language, however English as a Second Language and other home language supports may be provided.

ACCESS RANKINGS	
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS
20	4

RESOURCE RANKINGS	
STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING
22	24

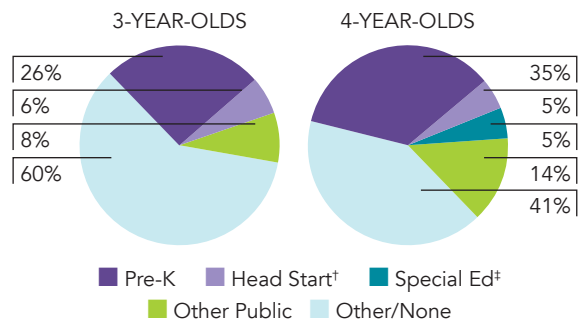
TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
8

ILLINOIS PRESCHOOL FOR ALL AND PRESCHOOL EXPANSION

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	83,661
School districts that offer state program	99% (counties)
Income requirement	No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation	2.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4	26,746
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	15,750
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	IL 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, ECE SpEd	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	Educator License	CDA or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	120 hours/5 years (teachers); PD plans; Coaching (PFA Expansion)	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	20 (3- & 4-year-olds)	20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:10 (3- & 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"/>

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



RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$555,609,751
Local match required?	No
State Head Start spending	\$0
State spending per child enrolled	\$6,641
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$9,179

* 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

