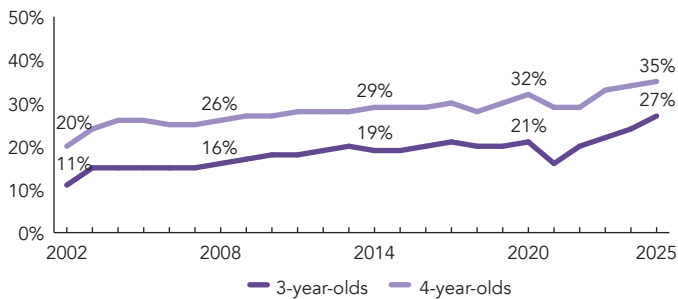
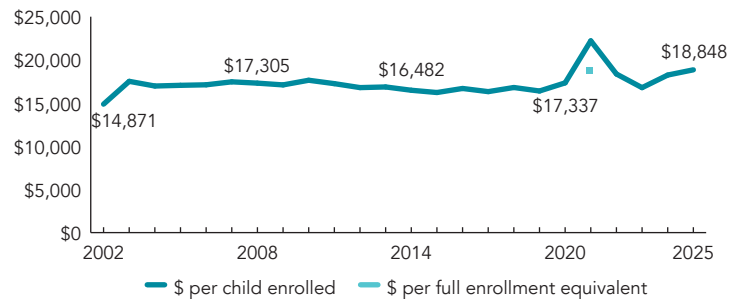


New Jersey

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2025 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2024-2025 school year, New Jersey preschool enrolled 65,365 children, an increase of 3,497 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$1,231,974,000, up \$103,290,612 (9%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled \$18,848 in 2024-2025, up \$604 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation. New Jersey met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

New Jersey continued to expand its state preschool program, supported by increased state investment and new statutory commitments. Governor Murphy allocated an additional \$10 million in funding, allowing 18 more local education agencies to participate in preschool expansion, and provided pathways for districts previously funded through Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) and the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) to transition into the expansion program as those programs sunsetted. In July 2025, the Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Expansion Law was enacted, codifying the preschool funding formula in statute, requiring annual preschool expansion awards from the New Jersey Department of Education, launching a three-year cost-sharing pilot to support districts, mandating statewide full-day kindergarten by 2030, and establishing a Preschool Expansion Steering Committee to guide implementation.

A new round of PDG B-5 Systems Building Grants were awarded to support states in building systems and strengthening their ECE programs that expand parental choice in a mixed-delivery system, improve system efficiency and collaboration, and raise the overall quality of programs. New Jersey received \$3,250,719 in this latest round.

BACKGROUND

New Jersey's largest and most intensive program, formerly known as the Abbott Preschool Program, was originally established under a 1998 New Jersey Supreme Court mandate to serve all 3- and 4-year-olds in 31 of the state's lowest income school districts. Since 2018, the state has expanded the program to include almost 300 school districts that are approved to expand their preschool programs to meet Abbott standards. The New Jersey Department of Education funds these districts to provide a full-day program to resident 3- and 4-year olds, with the goal of growing to reach 90% of the preschool-age population. The original 31 Abbott districts are required to contract with licensed private child care centers or Head Start programs that meet state standards. All other districts are required to contract with willing and able Head Start agencies, and encouraged to contract with private child care.

As noted above, the state is in the process of phasing out the ECPA and ELLI programs, which now operate in less than a dozen school districts.

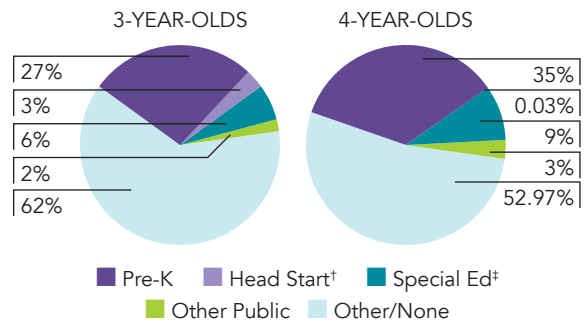
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
21	3	2	2	9

NEW JERSEY PRESCHOOL EXPANSION PROGRAM

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	65,365
School districts that offer state program	49%
Income requirement	No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation	6 hours/day (Abbott/Expansion), 2.5 hours/day (ECPA & ELLI); 5 days/week
Operating schedule	School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4	16,682
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	9,082
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	NJ 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	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	HSD	CDA or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	100 hours/5 years; PD plans; Coaching	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; Coaching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	15 (Abbott/Expansion); 18 (ECPA); 20 (ELLI)	20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	2:15 (Abbott/Expansion); 1:9 (ECPA); 1:10 (ELLI)	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.

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RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$1,231,974,000
Local match required?	No
State Head Start spending	\$55,687,429
State spending per child enrolled	\$18,848
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$18,848

* 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

