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## New Changes Will Improve Future Quality Standards in Oklahoma

*Oklahoma could soon join Georgia in setting an example for the nation in both preschool access and quality, but efforts needed to raise enrollment*

**NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.** - A new national [report](#) released today finds that Oklahoma ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in preschool access for 4-year-olds, up from 6<sup>th</sup> last year, despite a decrease in enrollment. The state ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in preschool access for 3-year-olds, down from 22<sup>nd</sup> last year. In 2024-2025 Oklahoma reached 65% of 4-year-olds and 3% of 3-year-olds. Oklahoma ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in state spending per child, up from 32<sup>nd</sup> last year. The state ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in all-reported spending per child which includes federal and local funding used for preschool.

The [National Institute for Early Education Research's 2025 State of Preschool Yearbook](#) presents a critical snapshot of preschool education in America. Currently, 44 states and DC fund preschool programs. Most state pre-K programs continue to primarily or only serve four-year-olds. Nationally, enrollment reached 37% of 4-year-olds but only 9% of 3-year-olds.

Additional Oklahoma findings for the 2024-2025 school year:

- Oklahoma preschool enrolled 36,114 children, a decrease of 2,343 from the prior year.
- State spending totaled \$207,632,498, up \$6,584,399 (3%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.
- State spending per child equaled \$5,749 in 2024-2025, up \$521 from 2023-2024, adjusted for inflation.
- Oklahoma met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

"Preschool enrollment had declined in Oklahoma over the last decade. Preschool enrollment is more than 10 percentage points lower than its peak in 2014," **said NIEER director Steve Barnett.** "Oklahoma should focus on ensuring parents know this high-quality pre-K is available and important for children's future success to return enrollment to past higher levels."

Nationally, state support for preschool education hit record highs in enrollment and funding in 2024-2025. The pace of growth slowed, however, compared to the prior year, and many states continue to lag behind pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

Georgia's state-funded pre-K program for 4-year-olds made history this year. It became the largest state-funded preschool program in the nation to meet all 10 quality benchmarks recommended by NIEER, and the first universal program to do so. Only 5 additional states meet all 10 of NIEER's research-based benchmarks for quality — Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, Mississippi, and Rhode Island — in this year's report. None of those programs have the reach of Georgia's Pre-K Program. NIEER's benchmarks measure essential preschool quality indicators, including teacher qualifications, class sizes, early learning standards, and curriculum supports.

### OKLAHOMA: 2025 NATIONAL RANKINGS

- Enrollment at age 4: 5th (65%)
- Enrollment at age 3: 27th (3%)
- State spending per child: 30th (\$5,749)
- All reported spending per child: 10th (\$12,433)
- Total benchmarks met: 9

“Oklahoma could soon join the list of states meeting all 10 benchmarks. The state’s new pathways for assistant teachers for certification will help them meet this high quality mark and join Georgia as a universal state meeting all 10 benchmarks,” **said Allison Friedman-Krauss, the report’s lead author.**

States spent nearly \$14.4 billion on preschool in 2024-2025. Twenty-eight states increased their investments in preschool from the prior year, for a total increase of \$434 million, or 3%, adjusted for inflation. Including federal and local dollars, total spending was almost \$17.7 billion. Three states each spent more than \$1 billion last year: California (\$4.1 billion), New Jersey (\$1.2 billion), and New York (\$1 billion). Together, these 3 states account for 45% of all state preschool spending. Texas adds almost another \$1 billion.

Additional information about the *2025 State of Preschool Yearbook*, including individual state profiles and maps, graphs, and state rankings, can be found at [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org).

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*The National Institute for Early Education Research at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research and the translation of research to policy and practice.*