Florida

OVERVIEW

WHAT’S NEW
Florida was one of 23 states that was awarded a three-year PDG B-5 renewal grant for $13.4 million annually to implement the state's strategic plan development with the 2018 PDG B-5 grant.

Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) received a $9.89 million increase, the largest since the 2011-2012 school year.

VPK programs in public schools closed physically in Spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Programs that closed physically were not required to offer remote learning but could apply to offer a “Flexible Innovative Option” which allowed virtual instruction. Between March and September 2020, VPK providers were reimbursed based on enrollment rather than attendance to ensure continued funding.

BACKGROUND
Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program was launched in 2005 after voters in 2002 approved a constitutional amendment providing prekindergarten access for all 4-year-olds. Parents may postpone enrollment of young 4-year-olds in the VPK program for a year, consequently making 5-year-olds eligible. The program is managed by the Office of Early Learning (OEL), which was established as an independent agency affiliated with the state Department of Education.

Age-eligible children are enrolled in either a 300-hour summer program, which every school district is mandated to offer, or a school-year program totaling 540 instructional hours. Teachers in the school-year program are required to have at least a CDA credential or equivalent credential. Teachers in the summer program are required to have a bachelor's degree.

VPK is provided in a variety of settings such as public schools, accredited nonpublic schools, licensed child care centers, accredited faith-based centers, and licensed family child care homes. Most children attend VPK in nonpublic school settings. Regional early learning coalitions monitor programs for compliance and administer VPK, distributing funding based on a fixed hourly rate. Programs are required to meet the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4 Years Old to Kindergarten, which were most recently revised in 2017.

Funding is determined by state legislators after review during the annual state appropriations process. The State Board of Education is required to establish a minimum kindergarten readiness rate to assess delivery of the VPK Education Program by providers and schools. All providers are required to administer the Florida VPK Assessment at the beginning and end of the school year, with results used as a pre- and post-assessment to demonstrate learning gains. In addition, there is a two-year VPK Progress Monitoring Pilot with over 1,500 providers using the same assessment in VPK that is administered at the beginning of kindergarten for aligned progress monitoring data.

Florida’s School Readiness Program is a separate initiative, funded by CCDF. The program offers financial assistance for childcare to qualified parents. This report focuses solely on the VPK program.
FLORIDA VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................. 166,726
School districts that offer state program.......................... 100% (counties)
Income requirement ..................................................... No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation .................................. Determined locally
Operating schedule ................................................. Determined locally
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............ 23,578
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ...... 31,972
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4............ 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>FL Pre-K Requirement</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Requirement Meets Benchmark?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early learning &amp; development standards</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum supports</td>
<td>Approval process</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher degree</td>
<td>BA (summer); CDA or equivalent + training (school year)</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>ECE, Elem. Ed., Other (summer); CDA (school year)</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>HSD</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>120 hours/5 years (public school teachers); 10 hours/year (teachers in licensed child care); PD plans (teachers &amp; assistants on probation)</td>
<td>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximum class size</td>
<td>12 (summer); 20 (school year)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>1:12 (summer); 1:11 or 2:12-20 (school year)</td>
<td>1:10 or better</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Screening &amp; referral</td>
<td>Vision, hearing &amp; health (public schools &amp; licensed child care only)</td>
<td>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; &amp; referral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous quality improvement system</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ................................................. $400,277,729
Local match required? ................................................. No
State Head Start spending .............................................. $0
State spending per child enrolled ................................ $2,401
All reported spending per child enrolled* ......................... $2,401

* 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

Data are for the 2019-2020 school year, unless otherwise noted.