South Carolina

OVERVIEW
South Carolina preschool enrolled 29,007 children in 2019-2020, an increase of 385 children from the prior year. State funding totaled $85,962,509, up $2,107,546 (3%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled $2,964 in 2019-2020, up $34 from 2018-2019, adjusted for inflation. South Carolina met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW
South Carolina was one of 23 states awarded a three-year PDG B-5 renewal grant for $11,146,654 designed to implement the strategic plan developed with the 2018 PDG B-5 planning grant. In 2020, South Carolina also received funding for a state longitudinal data system that will allow the state to maintain child-level data for both public and private programs. In March 2020, all state-funded preschool programs physically closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All programs were required to offer remote instruction.

BACKGROUND
South Carolina funds two preschool programs: the Education Improvement Act Child Development Program (EIA 4K) and the public/private Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). Both programs are delivered in public school settings via the South Carolina Department of Education’s Office of Early Learning and Literacy (OELL). CERDEP is co-administered in private preschool settings by South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness (First Steps), the state’s school readiness initiative.

EIA 4K, initiated in 1984, is funded as part of a one-cent sales tax supporting public education projects. Eligibility for EIA 4K is prioritized by law for children qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch or Medicaid; and allows for consideration of children with documented developmental delays. After income and developmental eligibility, EIA 4K districts may set their own eligibility criteria from a state-specified list of risk factors including low parent education, history of foster care, homelessness, and teen parents. State funding is allocated to districts by OELL using a formula according to the number of kindergarten students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch in each district. Participating school districts are required to offer, at minimum, a half-day pre-K program. Most school districts now provide full-day programs, with a few continuing to offer half-day programs.

CERDEP, originally called the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP), is the state’s other early education initiative. Created as a pilot program in 2006 in response to Abbeville County School District, et. al. v. South Carolina, a school equity funding lawsuit brought by rural school districts, the program was codified in 2014 along with the state’s Read to Succeed legislation (Act 284). Children who qualify for Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, or are homeless, transient, or in foster care are eligible to participate CERDEP.

To monitor quality, OELL conducts visits including an evaluation based on the ELLCO checklist used to provide feedback and support to ensure all classrooms are language- and literacy-rich. Some programs receive an additional level of monitoring which includes a fidelity verification measuring curriculum implementation. Feedback is provided to the teacher, school administrator, and/or the CERDEP district liaison/reading coach to provide post-observation feedback and set future goals.

First Steps’ 4K Coaches make announced and unannounced monitoring and technical assistance visits twice monthly to CERDEP classrooms in private settings. These visits include unannounced evaluative monitoring using the ECERS-3, as well as measures of curricular fidelity with reflecting, goal-setting and action plans for programs.
SOUTH CAROLINA CHILD EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM AND EIA/4K

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................................. 29,007
School districts that offer state program ............................................ 100%
Income requirement ........................................................................ 185% FPL
Minimum hours of operation ......................................................... 4 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule ......................................................................... School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ........................................ 5,541
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ....................... 9,923
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .......................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | SC PRE-K REQUIREMENT | BENCHMARK | REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
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Early learning & development standards | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | Yes
Curriculum supports | Approval process & supports | Approval process & supports | Yes
Teacher degree | BA (public); AA (nonpublic) | BA | No
Teacher specialized training | ECE | Specializing in pre-K | Yes
Assistant teacher degree | HSD | CDA or equivalent | No
Staff professional development | 15 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching | For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching | Yes
Maximum class size | 20 (4-year-olds) | 20 or lower | Yes
Staff-child ratio | 1:10 (4-year-olds) | 1:10 or better | Yes
Screening & referral | Immunizations, developmental; Referrals | Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral | No
Continuous quality improvement system | Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement | Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement | Yes

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

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending .............................................................. $85,962,509
Local match required? .................................................................. No
State Head Start spending ............................................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled ..................................................... $2,964
All reported spending per child enrolled* ....................................... $3,216

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

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

Pre-K* | $3,216
HDST** | $9,468
K-12*** | $13,225

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