Vermont

OVERVIEW

WHAT’S NEW
In March 2020 all state-funded preschool programs physically closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Head Start and some child care locations remained open to serve the children of essential workers. All programs that were physically closed were required to provide remote instruction.

BACKGROUND
In 1987, Vermont created the Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI), an annual competitive grant program to finance early education opportunities for at-risk 3- to 5-year-olds. In 2007, legislation expanded publicly funded prekindergarten education for 4-year-old children in public schools and private programs and provided funding through the state’s Education Fund, similar to K–12, pro-rated based on a model of 10 hours per week.

Starting in 2014, Act 166, required all public school districts to offer UPK for every 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old child not enrolled in kindergarten, for a minimum of 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually. UPK was fully implemented beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, with pre-K provided through school district operated programs and in contractual partnerships with state-approved public and private programs. Funding for Act 166 is a mix of federal, state, and local dollars.

Act 166 also requires an annual legislative evaluation of the state’s pre-K efforts that includes the number of children and programs participating in UPK, child progress monitoring data, and quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) level information. All Vermont state pre-K programs are required to attain at least four of five stars in Vermont’s QRIS, Step Ahead Recognition Systems (STARS), or hold NAEYC accreditation. STARS requires structured observations of classroom quality using the ECERS or CLASS. Licensed educators with an endorsement in early childhood education and/or early childhood special education are required to be lead teachers in all public school UPK classrooms. For private UPK programs, the licensed educator is required to oversee lead teachers in private UPK classrooms to ensure implementation of UPK education for each child.

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and Agency of Human Services (AHS) completed the process of designing a new joint-agency Pre-K Monitoring System, which was implemented starting in 2019-2020. The new monitoring system builds upon existing monitoring systems and procedures to assess the quality of the state’s approved private and public universal pre-K (UPK) programs. The system scales up the State’s focus on components of a high-quality, effective, pre-K education program across the many types of settings in which it is offered.
VERMONT UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION (ACT 166)

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ..................................................... 8,594
School districts that offer state program....100% (operating districts)
Income requirement ................................................................. No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation ................................................... 10 hours/week
Operating schedule................................................................. School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..................... 1,271
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .......... 861
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............. 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>VT 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>Approval process &amp; supports</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher degree</td>
<td>BA (public); BA for lead teacher, AA for classroom teacher (nonpublic)</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>ECE, CD, Elem. Ed. with ECE, ECE SpEd (public); ECE, CD, ECE SpEd (nonpublic)</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>HSD</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>9 credit hours/7 years (public teachers); 15 hours/year (assistants &amp; nonpublic teachers); PD plans</td>
<td>For teachers &amp; assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size</td>
<td>20 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>1:10 (3- &amp; 4-year-olds)</td>
<td>1:10 or better</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening &amp; referral</td>
<td>Vision, hearing, health &amp; more</td>
<td>Vision, hearing &amp; health screenings; &amp; referral</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous quality improvement system</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement</td>
<td>Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending ........................................ Not reported
Local match required? .................................................. No
State Head Start spending ........................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled .................................. Not reported
All reported spending per child enrolled* ...................... Not reported

* 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.

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-YEAR-OLDS</th>
<th>4-YEAR-OLDS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-K, Head Start†, Special Ed‡‡, Other/None

† Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K.
‡‡ Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

PRE-K*: Not reported
HDST**: $17,694
K-12***: $19,092

$ THOUSANDS

Pre-K spending: State contributions, Federal contributions, TANF spending.
HDST spending: State contributions, Federal contributions, Local contributions, TANF spending.
K-12 spending: State contributions, Federal contributions, Local contributions, TANF spending.

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