OVERVIEW
During the 2020-2021 school year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, Maine preschool enrolled 4,579 children, a decrease of 1,576 children from the prior year. State funding totaled $25,728,271, up $1,392,128 (6%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled $5,619 in 2020-2021, up $1,665 from 2019-2020, adjusted for inflation. Maine met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT’S NEW
There was a mix of in-person and remote instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, but the vast majority of programs were physically open in Fall 2021. Emergency orders were in place to attract new educators to apply and to make the certification process easier. Extensions were provided for educators who did not renew their certifications on time in 2020. New legislation passed in 2021 adopted some of the relaxed requirements, such as making the PRAXIS optional; lead teachers, however, are still required to have a BA with a focus in ECE. Classroom observations were not conducted during the 2020-2021 school year, but site visits are resuming during the 2021-2022 school year. Schools determined locally whether to offer summer programs and some accessed federal funds to do so.

Maine’s Public Preschool program was successful in securing $10 million in ARPA funding from the Governor’s office to support the expansion of public Pre-K in Maine. This funding will support expansion efforts in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years through an application process.

BACKGROUND
Maine established its Two-Year Kindergarten initiative in 1983 by allocating resources to local districts through the school funding formula. Since 2007, state-funded programs for 4-year-olds have been separately defined as the Public Preschool Program (PPP), still funded through Maine’s school funding formula, with a distribution of funds to 152 of the 194 (78.4%) school administrative units (SAUs) that operate kindergarten.

PPP classrooms function as either stand-alone programs located in public schools or SAUs partner with community-based child care programs or Head Start agencies. Schools are required to provide a local match to draw down a per-pupil state subsidy. The required local match is part of the school funding formula based on property wealth.

Maine’s Public Preschool Program Standards, promulgated as a regulation in December 2014, outlined programmatic changes including reduced child-staff ratio and group size, the use of evidence-based curricula, and child screening and assessments.
MAINE PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................. 4,579
School districts that offer state program ........ 78% (eligible school administrative units)
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 .................. 2,302
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .... 2,193
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .......... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | ME PRE-K REQUIREMENT | BENCHMARK | REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
--- | --- | --- | ---
Early learning & development standards | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | ✔
Curriculum supports | Approval process & supports | Approval process & supports | ✔
Teacher degree | BA | BA | ✔
Teacher specialized training | ECE | Specializing in pre-K | ✔
Assistant teacher degree | Educator Technician II (at least 9 ECE credits) | CDA or equivalent | ✔
Staff professional development | 6 credit hours/5 years (teachers only); PD plans (teachers only) | For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching | ❌
Maximum class size | 16 (4-year-olds) | 20 or lower | ✔
Staff-child ratio | 1:8 (4-year-olds) | 1:10 or better | ✔
Screening & referral | Vision, hearing, health & more | Vision, hearing & health screenings; referral | ✔
Continuous quality improvement system | Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement | Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement | ✔

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

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending .................................................. $25,728,271
Local match required? ......................................................... Yes
State Head Start spending .................................................. $0
State spending per child enrolled ....................................... $5,619
All reported spending per child enrolled* ......................... $11,620

* 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

Pre-K | $11,620
Head Start | $13,631
K-12 | $18,154

Data are for the 2020-2021 school year, unless otherwise noted.