Oklahoma

OVERVIEW
During the 2020-2021 school year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, Oklahoma preschool enrolled 38,450 preschoolers, a decrease of 4,233 from the prior year. State funding totaled $178,522,508, down $21,917,036 (11%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled $4,643 in 2020-2021, down $53 from 2019-2020, adjusted for inflation. Oklahoma met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW
In Spring 2021, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) launched the “Ready Together” recovery plan for PreK–12 students, including a webpage that serves as a hub for information on initiatives and guidance. Included in the plan are a number of large scale, state-level initiatives that support preschool programming. OSDE also started offering virtual meetings for teachers and administrators through a “Return to Learn” initiative, which includes guidance for launching instruction amid the pandemic, as well as targeted supports for distance learning.

In May 2021, the Governor of Oklahoma signed HB 1569, or the “Oklahoma Play to Learn Act,” into law. The law acknowledges the importance of child-centered, play-based learning as a rigorous and appropriate way for children in the early childhood grade levels to learn important academic content. OSDE staff traveled the state during the fall of 2021, offering a 3-hour professional development session titled “Purposeful Play” where educators focused on integrating play with foundational academic concepts.

BACKGROUND
Oklahoma launched its Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program in 1980, intending to serve all 4-year-olds in the state. In 1990, the program received statewide funding for 4-year-olds eligible for the federal Head Start program, but local areas could choose to serve additional 4-year-olds with local funds or tuition. In 1998, Oklahoma became the second state in the nation to provide free preschool for all 4-year-olds, with 100% of school districts providing the program. In addition, funding for 3-year-olds is provided by the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program (OECP) through a pass-through from the state to public school districts.

In 2016, Oklahoma adopted the Oklahoma Academic Standards, which are vertically aligned pre-K to 12th grade standards. The Oklahoma State Department of Education is providing continuous professional development and support to help teachers and administrators successfully implement these standards to strengthen pre-K programs and provide effective instruction and learning beyond the early years.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the Integrating Professional Learning Focus was piloted in all school districts in the state. As part of this new law, all teachers are required to have individualized professional development plans and receive coaching.

In Spring 2020, the Oklahoma State Legislature approved revisions to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Science and Fine Arts, which both included pre-K standards and emphasized play-based learning. Also passed was legislation requiring an additional layer of support for a more detailed review of instructional materials for grades PK–12. Facilitated by the OSDE, a committee of expert educators are reviewing materials to establish Tier 1, 2 or 3 level instructional materials based on a robust, subject and grade level specific rubric.

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THE STATE OF PRESCHOOL 2021 - STATE PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK - NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH - WWW.NIEER.ORG
OKLAHOMA EARLY CHILDHOOD FOUR-YEAR-OLD PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................... 38,450
School districts that offer state program .................................. 100%
Income requirement ......................................................... No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation ........................................... 2.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule ............................................................... School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ....................... 4,072
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ...... 11,532
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .............. 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | OK 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 | HSD | CDA or equivalent | ❌
Staff professional development | 15 hours/year; PD plans; Coaching | For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching | ✔
Maximum class size | 18 (3-year-olds); 20 (4-year-olds) | 20 or lower | ✔
Staff-child ratio | 1.9 (3-year-olds); 1:10 (4-year-olds) | 1:10 or better | ✔
Screening & referral | Vision, hearing, immunizations | 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 ................................................. $178,522,508
Local match required? ..................................................... No
State Head Start spending ................................................ $1,656,869
State spending per child enrolled ...................................... $4,643
All reported spending per child enrolled* ....................... $10,215

* 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.

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