During the 2021-2022 school year, Delaware preschool enrolled 818 children, a decrease of 12 from the prior year. State spending totaled $6,149,300, down $510,440 (8%), adjusted for inflation since last year. State spending per child equaled $7,517 in 2021-2022, down $506 from 2020-2021, adjusted for inflation. Delaware met 9 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW
By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, programs were no longer required to follow Emergency Order Regulations for COVID-19. Individual programs made decisions about whether to follow stricter procedures. Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, a statewide and national crisis, was exacerbated by the qualifications required of Delaware's Delaware Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) program.

In December 2022, the Delaware Department of Education was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B–5) renewal grant for $8 million. Funds are planned to be used for expanding state-funded preschool seats to include infant and toddlers, workforce supports for professionals, pilot changes to the Office for Child Care Licensing monitoring and the state’s Quality Improvement System’s verification processes and piloting of the Family Connects Home Visiting Model.

In winter 2023, the ECAP program went out to Request for Proposal (RFP). Programs will need to plan for potential changes to their state contract and programming during the 2022-2023 school year, in anticipation of program changes outlined in the RFP.

BACKGROUND
The Delaware Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) began in 1994, providing comprehensive early learning services for 4-year-olds eligible for the federal Head Start program. Eligibility expanded to 3-year-olds in 2017-2018.

Modeled after the federal Head Start program, ECAP requires participating programs to follow required federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. Per these standards, ten percent of enrollment slots are reserved for children with disabilities; the majority of participating children must live in families with incomes at or below 100% FPL. Since the reauthorization of the federal Head Start program in 2007, up to 35% of enrolled children may live in households up to 130% of FPL.

ECAP awards are available to private and public child care programs, such as for-profit child care, Head Start agencies, public schools, community-based organizations, and faith-based centers through an RFP process. Contracts for funded ECAP seats are determined based on Community Needs Assessment Data.

In 2012, Delaware began requiring all ECAP programs to participate in Delaware Stars, the state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for early childhood programs. All ECAP programs are required to maintain at least a Star 4 out of 5 rating.
DELAWARE EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ECAP)

ACCESS
Total state pre-K enrollment ................................................................. 818
School districts that offer state program ............................................. 100% (counties)
Income requirement ............................................................................. 100% FPL
Minimum hours of operation ............................................................. 3.5 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule .............................................................................. Minimum 160 days/year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ................................. 1,827
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............... 1,245
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ......................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>DE 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); At least AA with 50% BA (nonpublic)</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>ECE, CD, ECE SpEd</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>Working towards CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>90 hours/5 years (public teachers); 18 hours/year (nonpublic teachers &amp; assistants); 15 hours/year (public assistants); PD plans; Coaching</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>17 (3-year-olds); 20 (4-year-olds)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>2:17 (3-year-olds); 1:10 (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; 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.
* Indicates that while policy meets the benchmark, it is not being implemented fully.

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending ......................................................... $6,149,300
Local match required? ..................................................................... No
State Head Start spending ............................................................ $0
State spending per child enrolled ............................................... $7,517
All reported spending per child enrolled* ...................................... $7,517

For more information about the benchmarks, see the Executive Summary and Roadmap to State Profile Pages.
* Indicates that while policy meets the benchmark, it is not being implemented fully.

Data are for the 2021-2022 school year, unless otherwise noted.