OVERVIEW
During the 2021-2022 school year, Mississippi preschool enrolled 2,807 children, an increase of 80 from the prior year, as the program began to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. State spending totaled $8,000,000, with an additional $829,003 in federal recovery funds to support the program, up $466,820 (6%), adjusted for inflation since last year. State spending per child (including federal recovery funds) equaled $3,145 in 2021-2022, up $79 from 2020-2021, adjusted for inflation. Mississippi met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT’S NEW
During the 2021-2022 school year, the legislature provided an additional $8 million in planning grants for ELCs to prepare to open 2,900 more seats during the 2022-2023 school year. This expansion continued during the 2022-2023 school year, with another $8 million for additional planning grants to open 3,040 seats more during the 2023-2024 school year. Preschool enrollment should triple by the 2023-2024 school year and state funding will equal $24 million. Additionally, during the 2022 legislative session $20 million was appropriated to fund additional preschool programs in school settings, in the State Invested Pre-K (SIP) Program.

In December 2022, Mississippi was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B–5) three-year renewal grant for $8,095,090. Funds are planned to be used to offer coaching, family engagement activities, and professional learning opportunities for childcare, school district and Head Start preschool providers. This funding will also provide grant opportunities to school districts to offer blended preschool classrooms for children with and without disabilities in the same classroom.

BACKGROUND
The ELC Act of 2013 established Mississippi's first state-funded, voluntary pre-K program. The ELC Act provides funding to local communities to establish, expand, support, and facilitate the successful implementation of quality early childhood education and development services. Implementation began in January 2014, with capacity to serve 1,774 children.

The program was initially funded at $3 million per year and increased to $4 million for the 2016-2017 school year. Since 2017, nine new ELCs were funded. In 2021, the legislature doubled the funding to $16 million which will provide an additional 3,040 seats for the ELC Pre-Kindergarten program. As long as the ELC Act of 2013 is funded, current Collaboratives that meet program requirements will continue to be funded. The legislature increased the per pupil rates starting in the 2020-2021 school year.

Pre-K programs in Head Start centers, licensed child-care facilities, and public, parochial, or private schools formed and maintained stakeholder councils called ELCs, involving at least two program auspices. Each ELC designates a Lead Partner, either a public school or other nonprofit entity, with the instructional expertise and operational capacity to manage the ELC’s Pre-Kindergarten program.

The voluntary pre-K program intends to improve quality, increase access to high-quality pre-K programs for 4-year-olds, and prepare more children to enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and also supports local programs to improve pre-K quality and access. Pre-K programs also implement an integrated, effective system of early childhood curriculum, instruction, assessment, and program evaluation, including curricula aligned with the Mississippi Department of Education’s Early Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Infants through Four-Year-Old Children.
MISSISSIPPI EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment ..................................................... 2,807
School districts that offer state program ...................................... 17%
Income requirement ............................................................... No income requirement
Minimum hours of operation ........................................ 4 hours/day; 5 days/week
Operating schedule ............................................................... School or academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............................ 3,109
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ............ 17,827
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ................. 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY</th>
<th>MS 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</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher specialized training</td>
<td>ECE, CD</td>
<td>Specializing in pre-K</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher degree</td>
<td>AA in ECE or CD</td>
<td>CDA or equivalent</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff professional development</td>
<td>15 hours/year; 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>20 (4-year-olds)</td>
<td>20 or lower</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio</td>
<td>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; &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 ..................................................... $8,829,003
Local match required? .......................................................... Yes
State Head Start spending ..................................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled ............................... $3,145
All reported spending per child enrolled* ......................... $7,958

* 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

3-YEAR-OLDS

- Pre-K: 24%
- Head Start†: 1%
- Special Ed‡: 75%

4-YEAR-OLDS

- Pre-K: 8%
- Head Start†: 23%
- Special Ed‡: 3%

For 3- and 4-year-olds only.

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