

Pre-K Programs: National Landscape & Vermont

Vermont House Committee on Human Services

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GG Weisenfeld, Ed.D.

Associate Director of Technical Assistance

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)

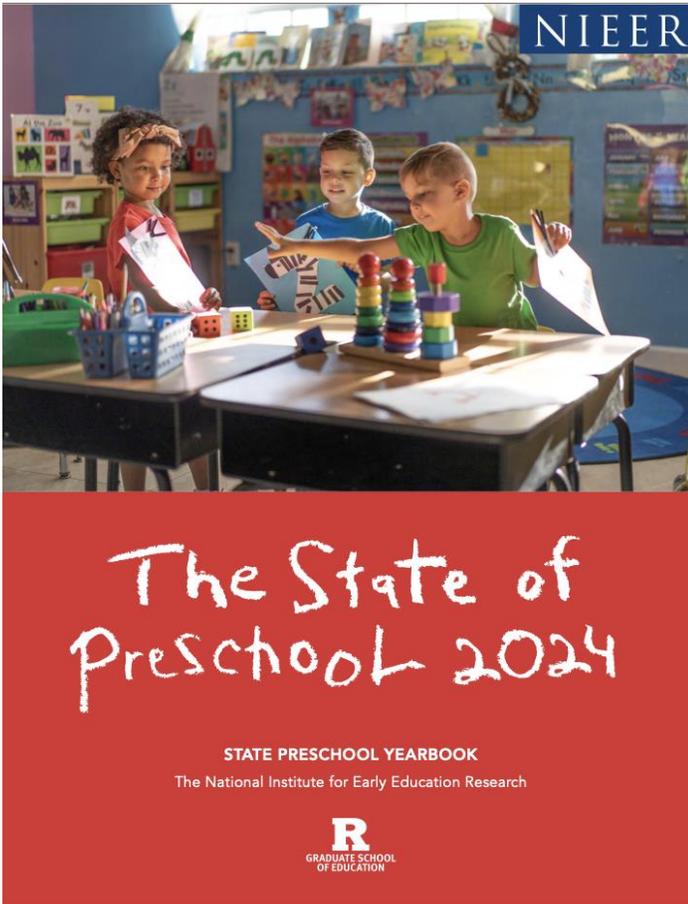
Rutgers University

High-Quality Pre-K's Many Benefits

Research has shown that children who attend high-quality pre-K have:

- Increased readiness for kindergarten
- Reduced grade retention through elementary school
- Reduced identification for special needs
- Long-term benefits on:
 - Mental health (improved)
 - Incarceration rates (reduced)
 - Educational attainment and Socioeconomic status (increased)

State of Preschool Yearbook



- Annual survey of state-funded preschool programs (3 & 4-year-olds)
- From 2001-02 to 2024-25; 23 years!
- Focus Topics: Access, 10 Quality Standards Benchmarks, Spending
- Other policies: Eligibility, operating hours
- 64 programs in 44 states & D.C.
- Information on Head Start and Preschool Special Education provided

NIEER's State of Preschool Benchmarks

Policy	Benchmark
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports
Teacher Degree	Bachelor's Degree
Teacher specialized training	Specializing in Pre-K
Assistant teacher degree	CDA or equivalent
Staff professional development	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; Individual PD plans; Coaching
Maximum class size	20 or lower
Staff-child ratio	1:10 or better
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, & health screenings; & referral
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement

(Friedman-Krauss et al., 2025)

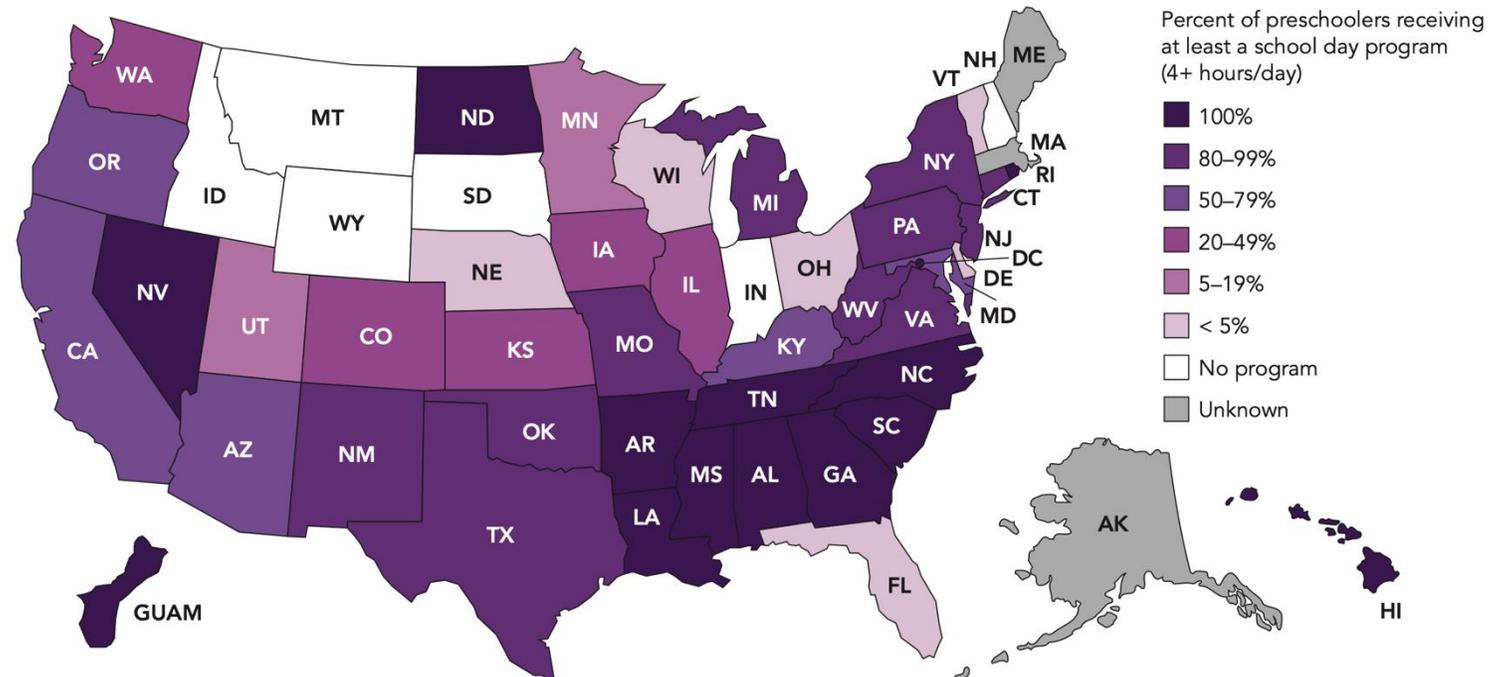
Other Pre-K Factors that Support Children's Learning and Development

Research has found that:

- Extended-day, extended-year preschool programs have a greater impact than those that attend half-day programs (these tend to happen in nonpublic school settings)
- Better child outcomes are associated with two years of preschool compared to only one at kindergarten entry
- Universal preschool programs are likely to produce benefits that far exceed the additional cost
- A mixed delivery system can increase family choice to select the type of environment they prefer for their children

State of Preschool 2021: Funded Hours

FIGURE 10: MOST STATES PROVIDED AT LEAST A SCHOOL-DAY PROGRAM TO THE MAJORITY OF PRESCHOOLERS



Including state preschool, Head Start and special education, six states (Florida, Iowa, Oklahoma, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin) and DC were already serving at least 70% of their population of four-year-olds prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

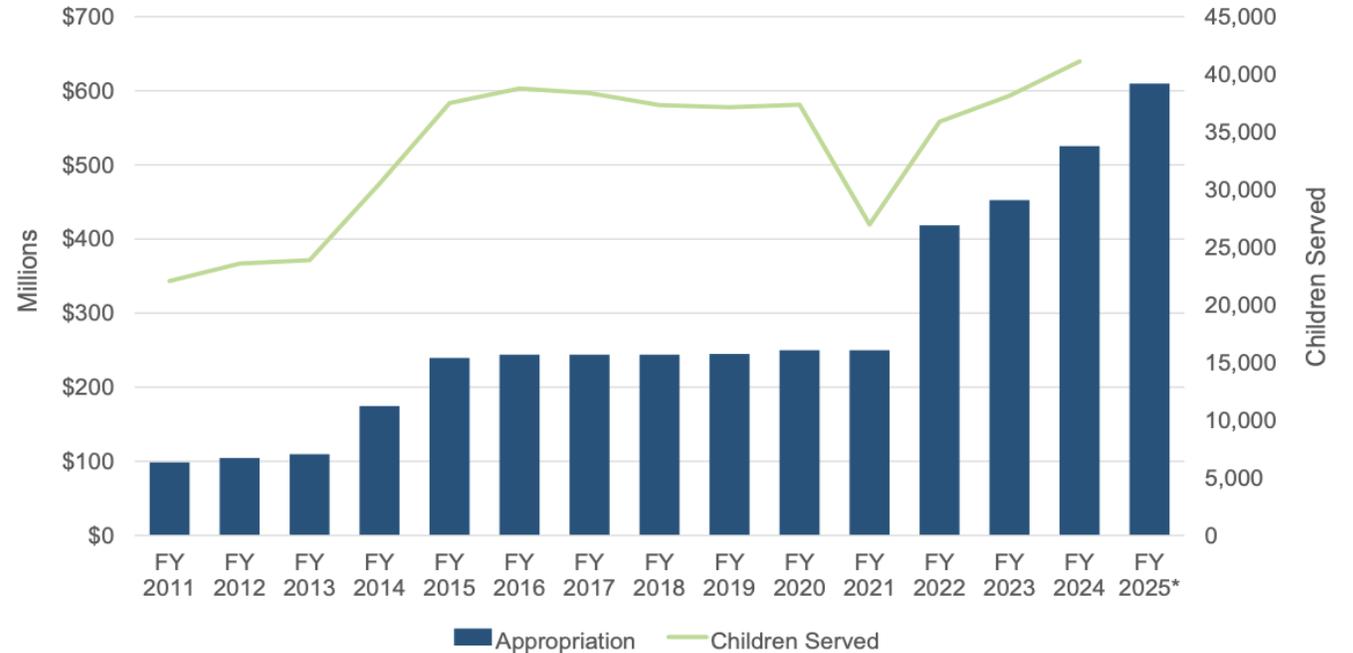
Michigan

The program went from 100% half-day program (2004-05) to the following (2023-24):

- Half-Day: 3%
- GSRP/Head Start Blend: 12%
- Full-Day: 69%
- Extended Program: 17%

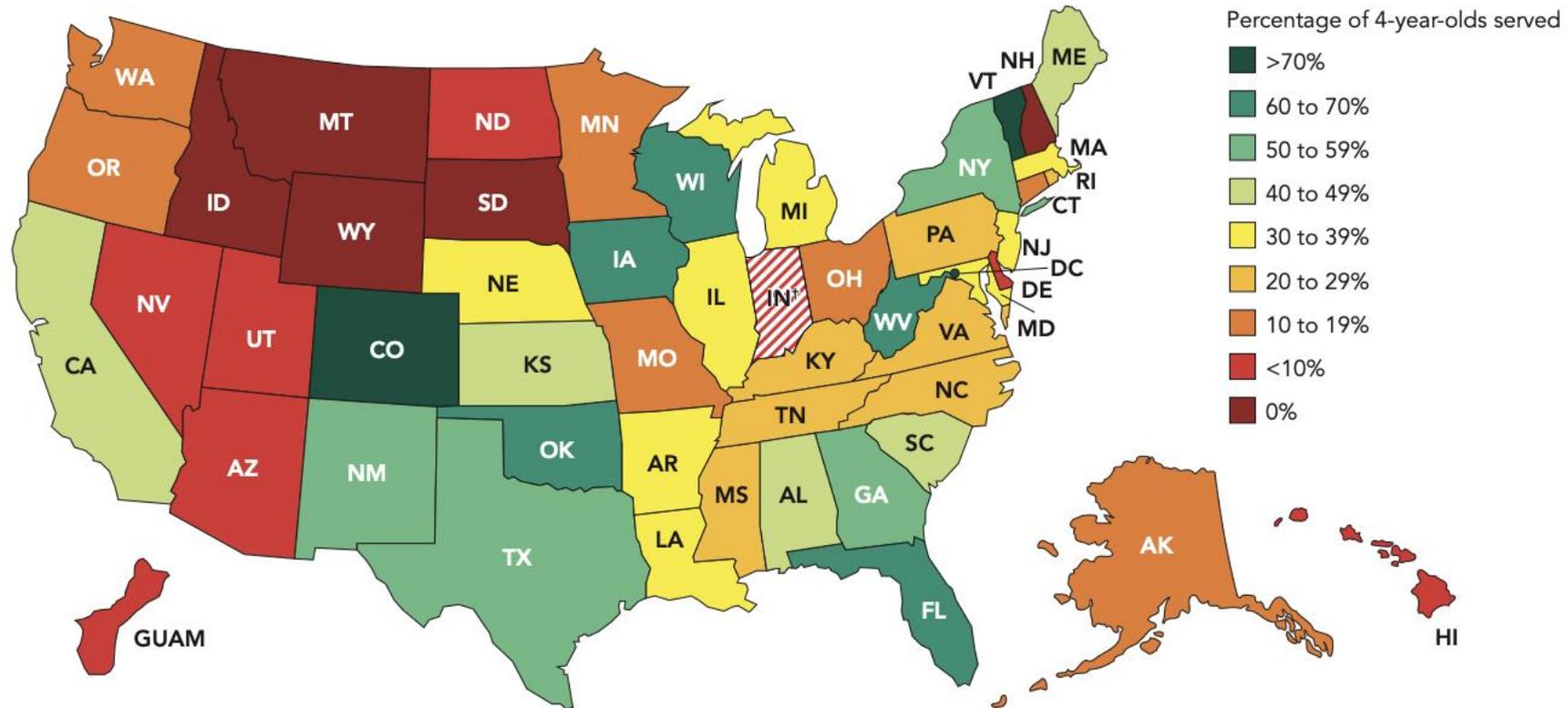
GSRP Preschool Appropriations

Funding increased by **67%** in FY 2021-22. Children served dipped during the pandemic before recovering to pre-pandemic levels. The program has continued to increase its per-slot funding as well as the number of children served each year since then.

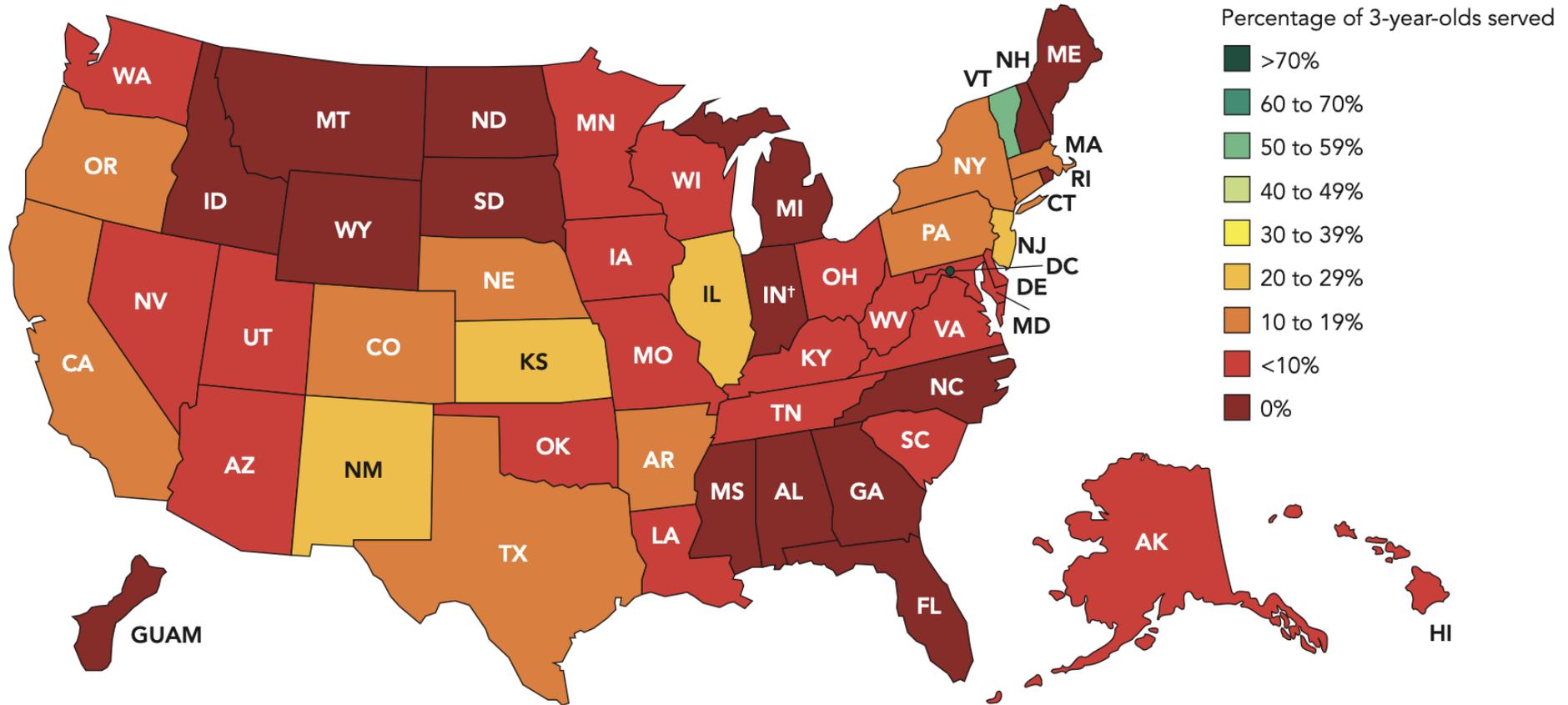


* FY 2024-25 Children Served is not yet known.

State of Preschool 2024: 4-Year-Olds



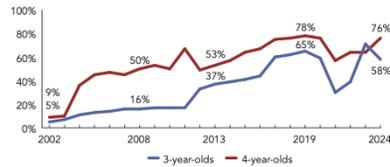
State of Preschool 2024: 3-Year-Olds



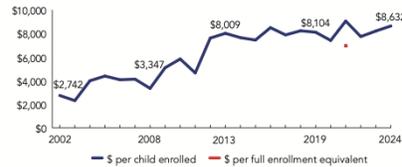
State of Preschool 2024: Vermont

Vermont

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED (2024 DOLLARS)



OVERVIEW

During the 2023-2024 school year, Vermont preschool enrolled 8,321 children, a decrease of 13 from the prior year. State spending totaled \$71,825,895, up \$3,464,516 (5%), adjusted for inflation, since last year. State spending per child equaled \$8,632 in 2023-2024, up \$429 from 2022-2023, adjusted for inflation. Vermont met 7 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

WHAT'S NEW

Act 76 was passed in June 2023 which convened a committee to study policy changes that may have impacts for both early childhood and school-age settings. One of the goals of Act 76 includes increasing equitable access and enhancing the quality of Universal Prekindergarten for 4-year-olds. The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) submitted a report to the legislature in December 2024.

In 2024, the Vermont Legislature approved a five-year waiver (expires 2029) of all fees for the AOE Peer Review alternate route to educator license. Act 76 provided private child care staff funding in the form of scholarships and loan forgiveness for professional advancement including educator licensure.

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 Universal Prekindergarten (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.

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 CLASS or TPOT. Public schools are required to have a Vermont licensed educator in each classroom and nonpublic schools are required to have licensed educator onsite during Universal Prekindergarten hours.

The AOE and Agency of Human Services (AHS) completed the process of designing a joint agency Pre-K Monitoring System that builds upon existing monitoring systems and procedures to assess the quality of the state's approved private and public UPK programs.

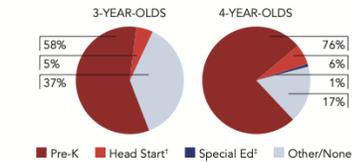
ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
2	2	13	16	7

VERMONT UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION ACT (ACT 166)

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment	8,321
School districts that offer state program	100%
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	1,264
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	639
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4	0

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE



¹ Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K.
² Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start.

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

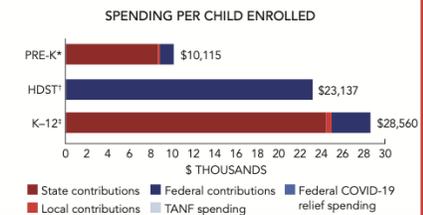
POLICY	VT PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	REQUIREMENT MEETS BENCHMARK?
Early learning & development standards	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum supports	Approval process & supports	Approval process & supports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree	BA (public); BA for lead teacher, AA for classroom teacher (nonpublic)	BA	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training	ECE, CD, Elem. Ed. with ECE, ECE SpEd	Specializing in pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree	HSD	CDA or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff professional development	6 credit hours/5 years (teachers); 15 hours/year (assistants); PD plans; Coaching (public & some nonpublic)	For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size	20 (3- & 4-year-olds)	20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff-child ratio	1:10 (3- & 4-year-olds)	1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health & more	Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

7

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending	\$71,825,895
Local match required?	No
State Head Start spending	\$0
State spending per child enrolled	\$8,632
All reported spending per child enrolled*	\$10,115



* 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.

State of Preschool 2022 & 2024: Vermont

2024	ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
	4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
	2	2	13	16	7

2022	ACCESS RANKINGS		RESOURCE RANKINGS		TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET
	4-YEAR-OLDS	3-YEAR-OLDS	STATE SPENDING	ALL REPORTED SPENDING	
	4	2	14	20	7

THE STATE OF PRESCHOOL 2022 - STATE PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK - NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH - WWW.NIEER.ORG

Vermont funds
 10 hours/week

State of Preschool 2024: Vermont

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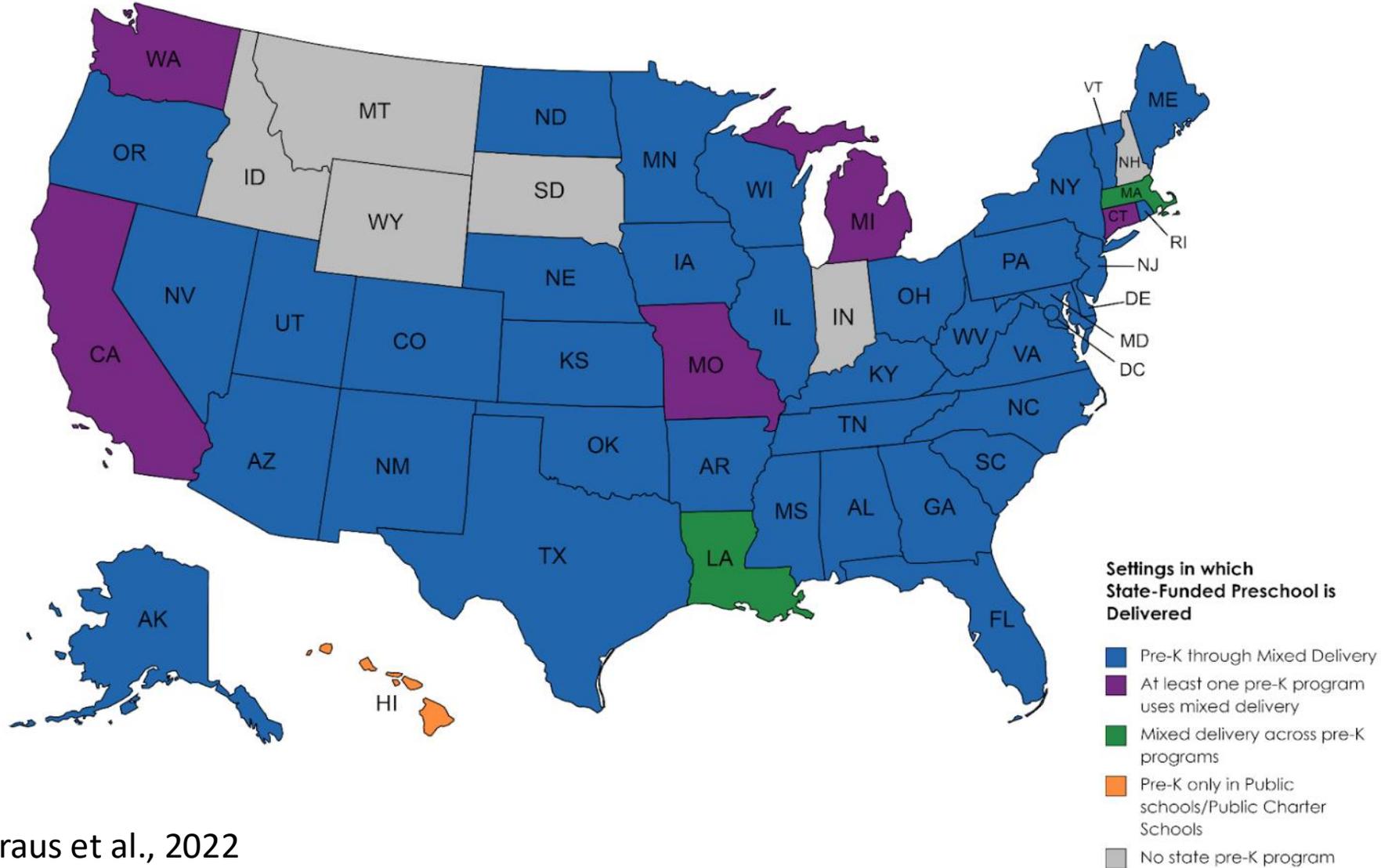
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Mixed Delivery System & Pre-K

A mixed delivery system is a combination of programs, providers, and settings—such as Head Start, family and center-based child care programs, public schools, and other community-based organizations—supported by a combination of public and private funds. (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015)

Mixed delivery pre-K (hybrid pre-K) refers to the places state funded pre-K classrooms operate. They may include: Head Start centers, family child care homes, private preschools, community-based programs, public schools, etc.

Snapshot of Mixed-Delivery Pre-K



Nationally: Mixed Delivery in State Pre-K

- All but 1 state allows for mixed delivery in public pre-K
- Some states are required to operate a mixed delivery program
- Flow of funding from the state to the program varies
- Policies may vary between public and nonpublic settings
- Funding levels may vary between public and nonpublic settings
- Approximately 40% of children in state-funded pre-K are served outside of public settings

In Vermont, trends were different:

- 46% enrolled in school based (Fall 2021)
 - More capacity for pre-K in private schools (59%) vs 41% in schools
- Not all state programs can report enrollment by location

Mixed Delivery Programs *May* Offer Families More Choices

- Nationally, data indicates that mixed delivery programs prioritize family choice and increase the likelihood of a cultural, racial/ethnic and/or language match between the family and program staff
- A 2018-2019 study of Vermont's UPK program found:
 - Program quality is similar across local education agencies with different population sizes and poverty rates
 - Having pre-K in locations other than their local education agency might increase access for families
 - Private programs reported being open for more hours per day and for more weeks per year than public school programs (reduces child transitions and meets working families' needs)

Research on Mixed Delivery Pre-K



State Preschool in a Mixed Delivery System

Lessons From Five States

Karin Garver, G. G. Weisenfeld, Lori Connors-Tadros, Katherine Hodges, Hanna Melnick, and Sara Plasencia



State Preschool Enrollment by Setting, Totals, and Percent of Total, 2020–21

State	Total Enrollment	% of 4-Year-Olds Served	LEA	Private	Head Start	Other Public ^b
Alabama	18,906	34%	82%	10%	6%	2%
Michigan	26,775	31%	59%	11%	17%	13%
New Jersey	46,895	29%	59%	41%		-
New York	115,597	46%	44%	47%	6%	3%
West Virginia ^a	11,981	56%	100%			-

^a 82% of WV Pre-K classrooms are “collaborative,” meaning that they are operated by LEAs in collaboration with community partners, including but not limited to Head Start and child care providers.

^b Includes colleges, universities, and military child care.

Note: New Jersey operates three public preschool initiatives—the Preschool Expansion Program, Early Childhood Program Aid, and the Early Launch to Learning Initiative—and enrollment from all three initiatives is included in the table. Similarly, New York operates two public preschool initiatives—the Statewide Universal Full-Day Prekindergarten grant and Universal Prekindergarten—and enrollment from both initiatives is included in the table.

Source: Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., & Jost, T. M. (2022). *The state of preschool 2021: State preschool yearbook*. National Institute for Early Education Research.

Mixed Delivery Funding Flow

Three typical ways state dollars flow:

- Some state offices manage the flow of funds (i.e., Alabama)
- Some states send preschool dollars to school districts and they subcontract out with community providers (i.e., New Jersey)
- Some states send preschool dollars to an intermediary organization who then contracts with public schools and community providers (i.e., Michigan, West Virginia)

Major Decision Points

- Governance and administration
- Funding
- Requirements and support for program quality
- Access and Equity

We do not have definitive research that determines which “decision point or option” is best.

State Examples of Funding Amounts

- Alabama
- Customized state funding levels
- Classrooms funded, not child
- Up to \$120,000 in start-up funding is provided

Michigan

- Children funded, not classrooms
- For the 2023-2024 school year:

\$10,185 per child for a full-day program

\$5,093 per child for a part-day program

The rate is the same across all settings

New Jersey's 2008-2009 school funding legislation includes three distinct per child rates:

- **\$11,506: children in the school district**
- **\$7,146: Head Start (which supplements grantees' federal Head Start funding)**
- **\$12,934: private provider settings**

A geographic cost adjustment is applied to the base rates for each county in the state, along with an annual cost-of-living increase.

Requirements for Program Quality

- **Teacher Qualifications:** BA degree and specialized training in ECE for all settings (not just public school)
 - In West Virginia there is an alternative pathway for certification for Community Based Providers.
 - In Alabama, only lead teachers in LEA programs are required to have a teacher credential.
- **Compensation Parity:** all pre-K settings to be compensated the same, often in line with K-12 teachers
 - New York City have achieved salary parity with K–12 teachers through unionizing
- **Professional Development Opportunities:** Coaching and other supports for all pre-K settings

Governance and Program Oversight

- States vary in who can access funds for PreK.
 - In some states, all providers can access funds through grants or contracts with the state.
 - In other states, funds flow only to local school districts or Intermediate Districts who then are able to sub-contract with other providers.
 - In some states, funds flow to local collaboratives who then are able to sub-contract with other providers.
- States set the standards and monitoring requirements but vary in who provides program oversight and quality monitoring.
- Most states do not directly recruit mixed delivery providers but may:
 - **Require** local districts to find non nonpublic school providers
 - **Encourage and support** finding community providers
 - **Implement special initiatives** to recruit mixed delivery providers and “get them ready” to meet state standards.

Access and Equity

- Coordinated Eligibility and Enrollment
 - Some states require local collaboratives to coordinate eligibility and enrollment (example: West Virginia requires that each county develop a unified enrollment system)
- Use of data
 - Some states collect data on the geographic location of all preschool program types
- Local Capacity and Authority
 - Some states have established local organizations to assess family needs, recruit providers, oversee quality, and manage funds. (examples: West Virginia ECE County Collaboratives, Alabama Regional Networks, Michigan's Intermediate School Districts)

Requiring Mixed Delivery

- Some states “require” mixed delivery, but do not specify what that means (i.e., Alabama, New Jersey)
 - However, in New Jersey, over 40% of children served in nonpublic schools. In Alabama, around 20%.
- Some states mandate the percentage of state preschool children who need to be enrolled in mixed delivery
 - Michigan: 30% of slots must go to nonpublic schools
 - New York: 10% of slots must go to nonpublic schools
- West Virginia’s Collaborative Model

Thank you for listening!

For more information see our website and
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<https://nieer.org/>

Contact: GG Weisenfeld
gweisenfeld@nieer.org

