



## Background on State Pre-K Programs

As Maryland plans to expand access to its state pre-K program to all low-income three- and four-year-olds, it is useful to see how other states have shaped their state programs. This note provides some overall data on the 50 states, and then more detail on select states whose programs have particular relevance for Maryland.

Of the 50 states (and DC):

- 43 states have state pre-K programs for four-year-olds; 4 states (VT, WV, OK and FL) and DC have “universal” access for all four-year-olds, although only DC and WV provide full-day programs. Almost all programs for four-year-olds in OK are full-day but it is not a requirement. WI will fund any district that chooses to offer pre-K for four-year-olds and “almost all” districts in that state offer it, although districts can choose whether to offer it full- or half-day. Most other states limit their programs to low-income children.
- 29 states have pre-K programs that serve three-year-olds; only DC and VT provide universal access for three-year-olds. DC provides full-day pre-K but VT provides only 10 hours per week. After DC, NJ serves the most three-year-olds in full-day programs with universal access to full-day programs for all three- and four-year-olds in the lowest-income districts in the state, as well as other three and four year olds in the state whose families meet poverty criteria.
- 9 states (CO, IA, KY, ME, OK, TX, VT, WV, WI) and DC fund pre-K through their education funding formula. Some, but not all, of these state formulas adjust the amount for student need and for property wealth of the district. TX and CO, for example, do not adjust for wealth or apply weights for categories of need, while ME and DC do both.

### West Virginia

West Virginia passed legislation in 2002 requiring the state to expand access to preschool education programs in order to make prekindergarten available to all four-year-olds in the state by the 2012-2013 school year. West Virginia's preschool program, called West Virginia Universal Pre-K, is now available in all counties. West Virginia requires that a minimum of half of the programs operate in community-based settings such as private prekindergartens, child care centers or Head Start programs in order to facilitate expansion of the program. Currently 75 percent of the slots are provided by non-public school programs. West Virginia phased in quality requirements: it was only

in 2014 that all lead teachers in community settings were required to have a BA; in 2015, all assistant teachers were required to have a CDA; in 2016, all programs were required to be full-day. The state funds the full cost of each slot and does not require a local match, although federal funds and TANF funds supplement the state funding. West Virginia spent an average of \$6,524 per student in 2017.

### **Vermont**

In 2014, Vermont passed Act 166 which requires the provision of pre-K for three- and four-year-olds for at least 10 hours per week. Currently, 75 percent of four-year-olds and 60 percent of three-year-olds are enrolled. It is a mixed system, with some programs in public schools but most in community programs. Since it was put in place, enrollment of low-income children has not risen as much as that of other children, most likely because of the limited hours. Vermont spent \$6,878 per enrolled child in 2017.

### **Florida**

Florida passed the Free Universal Voluntary Pre-K Act in 2005 which guaranteed all four-year-olds half-day pre-K. They currently service 77 percent of four-year-olds in the state through a mixed delivery system. The state funds three hours of pre-K per day during the school year (15 hours per week) and 300 hours over the summer. The state requires teachers in the summer programs to have a BA but teachers in the school year programs only to have a CDA. Regional early learning “coalitions” were formed to monitor programs in their regions and disburse funds. Florida spent \$2,282 per enrolled student in 2017.

### **District of Columbia**

The District of Columbia has been expanding pre-K provision in the city since 2008 through a mixed system of public schools, public charter schools and private providers. Currently all three- and four-year-olds are guaranteed a full-day slot, although slots are allocated by lottery so there is no guarantee of a slot in a local school or program. Enrollment is the highest in the nation: 66 percent of three-year-olds and 88 percent of four-year-olds. Teachers in public schools and private programs are required to have a BA and assistants are required to have a CDA; there are not requirements for public charter schools. These programs are funded as part of the district school funding formula, with weights for low-income, second language learners and special education applied. The full cost per slot was an average of \$16,996 per student in 2017.

### **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin was the first state in the nation to guarantee universal access to pre-K for four-year-olds. Since the 1880s, the state has funded education for four-year-olds in any district that chooses to offer it as part of the state funding formula. State funding is for half-day programs (the weight is .5) but most districts add local funds to extend the program to full-day. The state adds another weight of .1 to each program to support parent outreach and education activities. WI requires lead teachers to have a BA with

early learning certification. Currently, 75 percent of four-year-olds in the state are enrolled. WI spent \$3,769 per student in 2017.

### **New Jersey**

New Jersey funds low-income three- and four-year-olds in full-day pre-K programs through three different state programs. Overall, they enroll 30 percent of four-year-olds and 21 percent of three-year-olds in the state. The largest of the three programs is open to all three- and four-year-olds in the 35 poorest districts in the state. The second program covers all three- and four-year-olds in an additional set of districts where between 20 and 40 percent of children meet FRPL criteria. The third program covers children in families in the rest of the state at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. The state pays the full cost for these programs, and there is no required local match. NJ spent, on average, \$12,242 per student in 2017. NJ requires lead teachers to have a BA with early childhood learning certification, but requires only a HSD for assistant teachers.

### **Oklahoma**

In 1998, Oklahoma became the second state in the nation to provide free preschool for all four-year-olds, with 99 percent of school districts providing the program. Approximately 73 percent of the state's four-year-olds are enrolled in the program. Eighty-seven percent of those enrolled are in full-day programs. Funding is through the state's school finance formula. A per-pupil rate, calculated using the age of the child and the length of the program day, is used to repay districts. They require lead teachers to have a BA with early childhood learning certification, but require only a HSD for assistant teachers. State spending per student was \$3,501 in 2017.

### **Alabama**

First Class Pre-K is a grant program administered by the Department of Early Childhood Education that provides funding for preschool education for four-year-olds in the state. It started in 2000, and First Class is available in all counties throughout Alabama and provides funding to start new classrooms, support quality improvements in existing classrooms and provide extra support to classrooms serving low-income populations. First Class classrooms are supported by a coach and monitored for improvement. All lead teachers are required to have a BA with early learning certification, and in 2015 Alabama put in place policies aimed at addressing salary parity issues over time. State funds must be matched by local funds, and local programs are allowed to put sliding scale fees in place. Different tiers of grants are offered, depending on the needs of the program: there are Excellence grants that supplement programs that already have core funding; there are Tiered grants which offer core funding for programs; and there are New Classroom Plus grants which are one year grants to cover the costs of construction, equipment and materials for new programs. Alabama spent on average \$4,594 per enrolled student in 2017.

All data is from the following sources:

[https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/How\\_States\\_Fund\\_Pre-K.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/How_States_Fund_Pre-K.pdf)

<http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2017>

[http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NASBE\\_Standard\\_Jan2018\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NASBE_Standard_Jan2018_FINAL.pdf)