

# "Comparison of State Policies for Access and Funding of Early Childhood Education Programs"

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## INTRODUCTION

Efforts to provide or improve access and state funding to early childhood education programs, also called Preschool or Prekindergarten (Pre-K) programs, have resulted in substantial enrollment increases in recent years. From 2002 to 2008 alone, enrollment in state-funded Prekindergarten programs in the United States nearly doubled. The United States average enrollment of 4-year-olds<sup>1</sup> in a state-funded Prekindergarten program in the 2001-2002 school year was 14.8 percent (Barnett, Robin, et al. 2003). By the 2007-2008 school year, the nationwide enrollment of 4-year-olds increased to 24 percent (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). This report focuses on state-funded early childhood education programs and how access to the programs is made available.

As of the 2007-2008 school year, 12 states<sup>2</sup> have not established state-funded Preschool programs<sup>3</sup> to support the early childhood education initiative (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Of the remaining 38 states, enrollment of 4-year-olds covers a range from 1.6 percent enrollment in Minnesota to 71 percent enrollment in Oklahoma (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Only 25 of the 38 states which provide state-funded Prekindergarten programs include 3-year-olds in program enrollment. Illinois, which has the highest 3-year-old enrollment in its program, enrolled just under 20 percent of the state's 3-year-olds in the 2007-2008 school year (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Until recently, many states have enacted preschool programs which only target at-risk<sup>4</sup> 4-year-olds. A quickly emerging trend in many states is to instead provide universal access to Preschool programs in which any 4-year-old may be enrolled, regardless of economic standing or other targeted factors. However, due to the cost imposed on states to offer these programs, very few are currently including 3-year-olds<sup>5</sup> in the mandated availability. For this reason, 3-year-old enrollment in early childhood education programs will be briefly discussed in this report as applicable, but the enrollment of 4-year-olds will be the main focus.

To properly establish a state-funded early childhood education initiative, policies which define program requirements, funding, and eligibility of children are implemented. Early childhood policies vary greatly by state yet serve one general purpose: to provide better education for today's children for the benefit of tomorrow's society. Providing young children, especially

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<sup>1</sup> The enrollment increase of 3-year-olds in state-funded Prekindergarten programs during this time was minimal. Enrollment during the 2001-2002 school year was 3 percent and increased to only 3.6 percent by 2007-2008.

<sup>2</sup> These states are Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming as of the 2007-2008 school year.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise specifically specified, funding and enrollment figures and other information for Head Start programs are not included in this report.

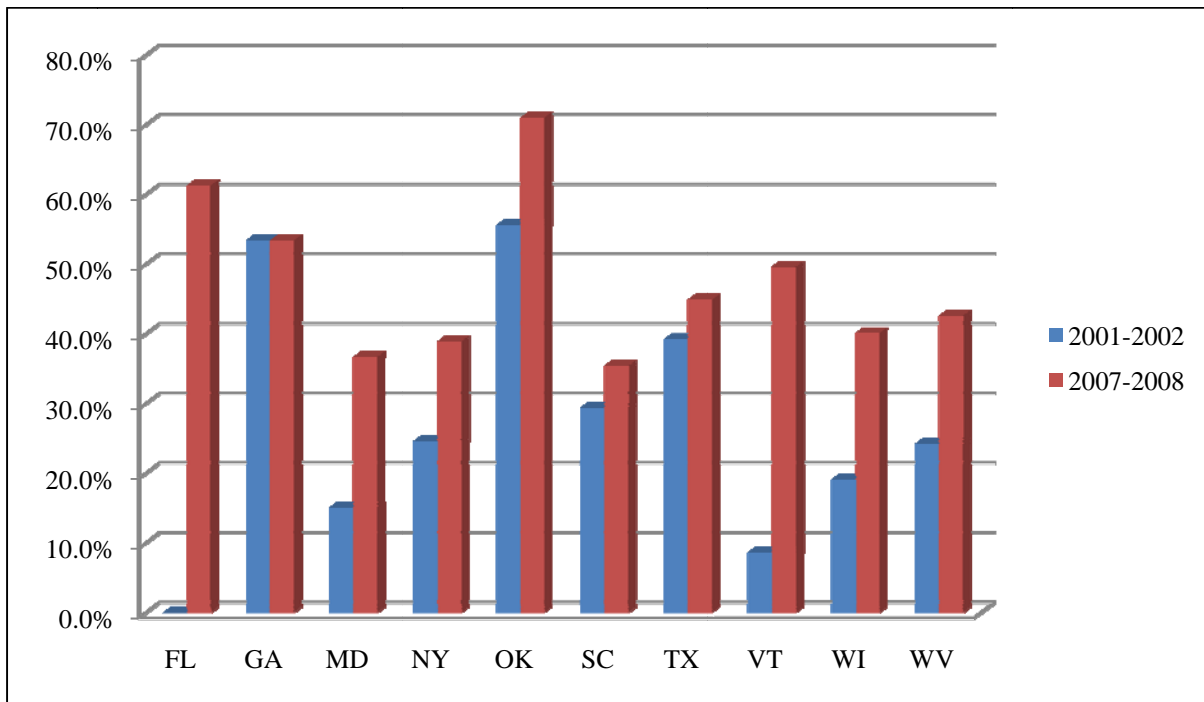
<sup>4</sup> The term "at-risk" has no official definition but is a term frequently used to describe young children who are at greater risk of poverty, substandard school performance, criminal activity, or other factors at more mature ages (Moore 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Enrollment figures of 3-year-olds may include all children of that age group or only those with disabilities or who are at risk. As available, this distinction will be indicated. In this instance, because all programs are being considered, 3-year-olds are not limited to only those with disabilities or who are at risk.

those children who are considered at risk, with quality early education has been shown to yield many societal benefits (Gormley, et al. 2005, Temple and Reynolds 2007).

The focus of this report centers on state policies which define the access and funding guidelines of early childhood education programs. Policies implemented by the ten states with the highest 4-year-old enrollment, as supplied by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for the 2007-2008 school year, are reviewed. Enrollment figures for the states selected are illustrated in Figure 1. For the yearly enrollment figures from the 2001-2002 school year, see Appendix A.

**Figure 1: Preschool Enrollment of 4-Year-Olds**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

In the following sections, literature on state policies and early childhood education initiatives is reviewed and each chosen state is examined.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous studies have shown the societal and educational benefits of providing quality education to young children (Barnett and Masse 2007, Gormley, et al. 2005, Temple and Reynolds 2007). In the short term, having participated in an early childhood education program improves the likelihood of a child’s educational success when beginning Kindergarten, as opposed to a child who did not participate in a Preschool program. In the long term, Preschool participation has been shown to improve the likelihood of the individual’s success both in public school and the chance of the individual attending college. Preschool participation also decreases

an individual's chances of grade repetition, not completing high school, and engaging in criminal acts.

State policies which allocate funding and provide guidelines for early childhood education initiatives have greatly expanded over the past three decades. In 1980, legislation in only eight states provided funding for early intervention programs (McMahon, Egbert and McCarthy 1991). By 1990, more than twenty-five states provided state-funded programs, and in the early 2000s the number of states which funded a Prekindergarten program had reached thirty-seven (McMahon, Egbert and McCarthy 1991, Barnett, Robin, et al. 2003). With the inclusion of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program in 2005, thirty-eight states currently provide state-funded early education programs (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Universal early intervention programs enhance cognitive behavior development in young children (Gormley, et al. 2005). Early cognitive behavior development received in such programs in turn increases school readiness. Gormley et al (2005) analyzed 1,567 children enrolled in Tulsa's Pre-K program based on results of the Woodcock-Johnson Achievement test scores. As this study found, children who were involved in Oklahoma's universal Pre-k program developed better language, literacy, and mathematical skills before beginning Kindergarten. The results found that attending the Tulsa Pre-K program improved letter-word scores on the Woodcock-Johnson Achievement test by nearly 53 percent, spelling cores by over 26 percent, and applied problems scores by nearly 18 percent (Gormley, et al. 2005).

The benefits of early childhood education programs also outweigh the costs, as was discovered in a benefit-cost analysis of the Carolina Abecedarian Program (Barnett and Masse 2007). The Abecedarian program, implemented in 1972, is a longitudinal study which randomly placed infants from low-income families into either the test group or control group for the study (Carolina Abecedarian Project 2010). The children in the test group were then provided high-quality child care and education on a full-time basis year round for five years. The children's progress was measured at ages 12, 15, and 21 (Carolina Abecedarian Project 2010). Barnett and Masse (2007) found that the economic benefits associated with early intervention initiatives included decreased public education costs and increased lifetime earnings.

Participation of young children in such programs as the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC) has been shown to decrease the likelihood of future criminal activity and grade retention (Temple and Reynolds 2007). The Chicago CPC programs provide ongoing, federally-funded early childhood intervention to children in high-poverty neighborhoods in Chicago (Temple and Reynolds 2007). Participation in such programs also decreased the possibility of a child needing special education. Further, this study concluded that the benefit of providing Preschool programs to young children, especially those from low-income households, greatly outweighs the costs. This study estimated that the CPC programs yielded a return of \$10.15 for each dollar invested<sup>6</sup> in the programs.

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<sup>6</sup> Temple and Reynolds (2007) also examined the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project in this study. The returns for each of these programs were calculated to be \$8.74 and \$3.78 per dollar invested, respectively.

Whether the program is made available to all children or only those at-risk is an important issue to determine its ability to improve the educational success of young children. If state policy provides structure and funding for a targeted early childhood education program only, a number of factors come into light. For one, qualifying children based on household income can create eligibility inconsistencies, as a child's qualification may change throughout the school year because "poverty is transitory, and thus presents a moving target" (Ackerman, et al. 2009). Over the course of a school year, students who qualify may not be enrolled while those enrolled may no longer qualify.

Another study found that if only children from low income families will qualify for a state-funded Preschool program, the public may not be willing to help supply funding through their own tax dollars (Gelbach and Pritchett 2002). By limiting the eligibility for targeted programs, some states may find it more difficult to obtain enough funding; if one citizen's child is not eligible for high-quality Preschool, that individual will likely not be willing to fund another child's enrolment and thus will not support the initiative politically.

If state policies instead provide access to high-quality programs to all children, the circumstances change substantially. Providing a Preschool program to the majority of young children will, as stated above, improve the potential for success and decrease such risks as grade repetition and the need for special education (Ackerman, et al. 2009). In turn these improvements positively affect the benefit-cost ratio of state-funded Prekindergarten programs.

## TEN STATE COMPARISON

Early childhood education policies vary greatly by state. State policies in six of the ten states examined in this report establish one program to provide education to young children. The other four states establish state policies for two early childhood education programs. The guidelines for each of these programs vary as well. Thirteen state early childhood education programs establish guidelines regarding degree requirements for instructors. All programs set a minimum length of time and frequency under which the programs must operate and define sources and allocation of state funding. Appendices C and D outline state program benchmarks and other access and funding characteristics.

### Access

A total of fourteen early childhood education programs are implemented in the ten states examined in this report. The fourteen Preschool programs can be grouped by the type of access and funding models used. Programs are categorized by whether they are voluntary, the type of access available, and the source of funding for the program. If a program is voluntary, children of the appropriate age for the program are not required to be enrolled. For every program in this report, enrollment of eligible children is completely voluntary.

Access of the Preschool programs differs in each state and in each state's program. Access for a program can be universal, targeted, or semi-universal. If a program is universal, there is enough

funding and space available to serve all 4-year-old children. Programs which are targeted limit eligibility based on certain criteria relating to the child or the child's family. Common criteria for targeted programs focus on children who are from an impoverished family (measured by the federal poverty level), developmentally delayed, or homeless.

The third category for program access is semi-universal. These programs do not limit eligibility based on at-risk factors but also do not currently have enough funding or space to serve every 4-year-old in that state. In New York, children are selected to attend the UPK program through a lottery selection process in each district which offers the program (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Currently, only three of the fourteen programs in this report offer completely universal access. Seven programs are targeted and define different factors for determining eligibility. The remaining four programs are semi-universal, meaning that while they do not currently offer complete access to all 4-year-old children, the program has plans in place to reach universal status in the near future.

## Funding

Funding sources for Prekindergarten vary by states as well. Two programs rely solely on the state lottery program for funding. Six other programs rely solely on state school funding formulas.<sup>7</sup> The remaining six programs supply program funding through multiple sources, including state lottery programs, school funding formulas, and early learning coalitions.

State policies on early childhood education programs are subject to change as the programs expand or further study suggests that more strict requirements would improve program success. State financial situations also impact changes to early childhood education policy. Per the budgetary needs and requirements of states each year, funding for Prekindergarten programs can fluctuate substantially.

In the past year, five states<sup>8</sup> are proposing decreased Prekindergarten program spending to balance the statewide FY 2010 budgets (Pre-K Now 2009). Thirteen other states are proposing no change in program spending (Pre-K Now 2009). However, suggested gubernatorial Pre-K investment in Pre-K programs for FY 2010 would increase total state investment in the United States to approximately \$5.4 billion (Pre-K Now 2009). In Figure 2, the changes in per student spending from the 2001-2002 to 2007-2008 school years are provided. For the yearly per student funding figures from the 2001-2002 school year, see Appendix B.

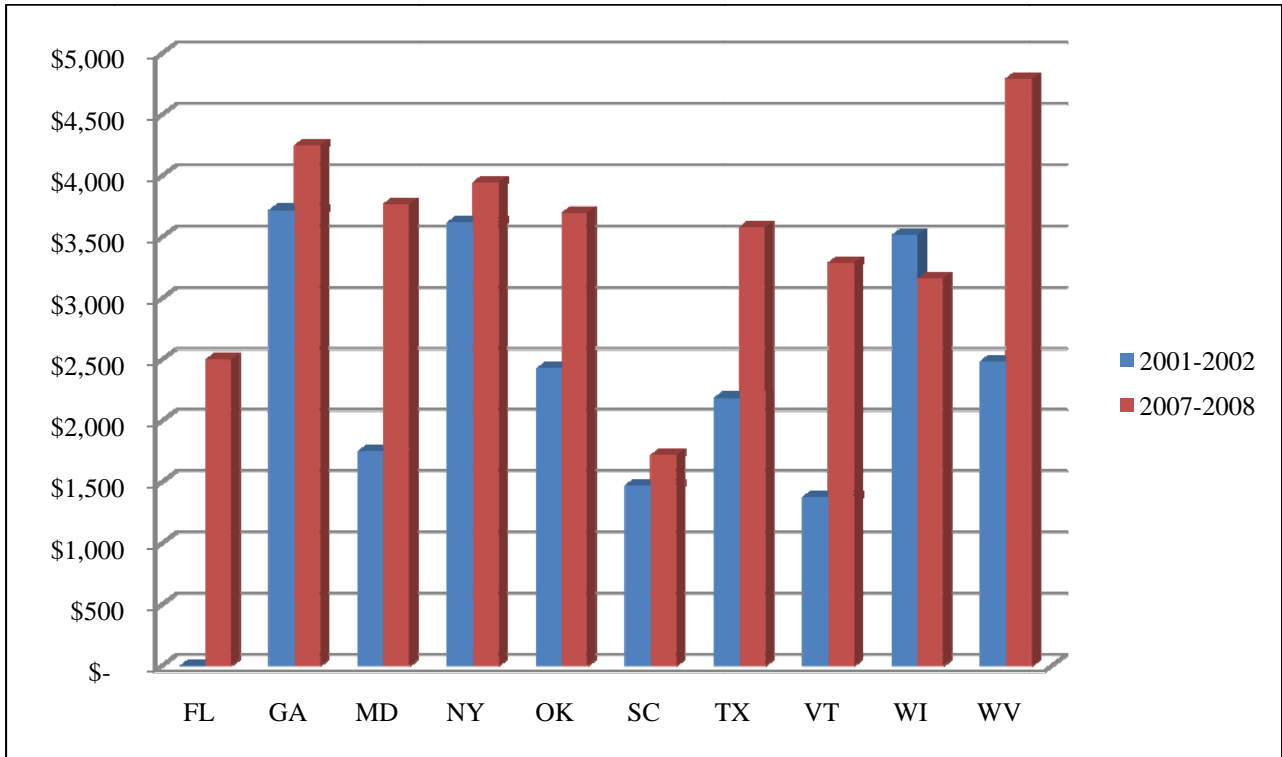
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<sup>7</sup> School funding formulas provide consistent funding for Preschool programs. However, due to the complexity of their structure, school funding formulas are not heavily examined in this report.

<sup>8</sup> Of the five states, New York and South Carolina are the only two which are included in this report.



**Figure 2: Per Student Preschool Spending**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

As Figure 2 illustrates, total state per student preschool funding increased in every state studied over the seven school years represented except Wisconsin. In this State, per student spending decreased \$357 over the represented time period.

## Program Quality Standards and Benchmarks

The NIEER's *State of Preschool Yearbook* series provides an analysis of early childhood education programs through ten different benchmarks (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The policies and related benchmarks are provided in Table 1. According to the NIEER the quality benchmarks were determined through program quality research and should be viewed individually to determine a program's quality, rather than the total number of benchmarks met (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

**Table 1: Program Quality Standards**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
Early learning standards	Comprehensive
Teacher degree	Bachelor's degree
Teacher specialized training	Specializing in Pre-K
Assistant teacher degree	CDA or equivalent
Teacher in-service	At least 15 hours per year
Maximum class size	At most 20
Staff-child ratio	1:10 or better
Screening/referral and support services	Vision, hearing, health; at least 1 support service
Meals	At least 1 per day
Monitoring	Site visits

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

The ten quality standard benchmarks included in Table 1 were compiled through research by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) and identified as the benchmarks which add to the quality of early childhood education programs. Each policy and benchmark is examined briefly below. A comprehensive list of the benchmarks met by each of the fourteen programs studied in this report is provided in Appendix C.

The first benchmark is set for comprehensive early learning standards. The argument for this quality standard is to ensure that several educational topics are taught in Preschool programs rather than a select few. These topics include:

- Language/literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Science;
- Social/emotional skills;
- Cognitive development;
- Health and physical development; and
- Social studies (Barnett, Robin, et al. 2003).

The NIEER sets a teacher education quality standard to maintain the quality of the material taught to children in early childhood education programs. Without requiring a minimum level of education, nearly anyone could become an instructor in a Preschool program. The benchmark is currently set that the main instructor of a Preschool program hold a Bachelor's degree. Further, the NIEER requires that the minimum degree requirement be mandatory in both public and private settings for a Preschool program to meet the benchmark.

The teacher specialized training benchmark requires that the instructor specialize in early childhood (Pre-K). This requires teachers to hold either a license, degree, or other credential certifying them in early childhood education. Assistant teachers are required to hold at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent.

Teacher in-service requirement makes a minimum of 15 hours per year of "professional development" the benchmark for quality standards (Barnett, Robin, et al. 2003). The NIEER specifies a maximum class size benchmark of at most 20 children to limit the size of the classes and improve the quality of learning. Together with a maximum class size, the next benchmark suggests a staff-child ratio of 1:10 or better for program quality.

Screening/referral and support services require a benchmark for vision, hearing, and health screenings as well as at least one support service for the health and wellbeing of the children enrolled. Meals<sup>9</sup> are benchmarked as one meal per day. The monitoring benchmark of site visits includes parent-teacher conferences, information for parents on healthy nutrition, and support services.

In the following subsections, Preschool programs and policies for each state selected for this report are examined. Each state's section includes trend lines for the progress of both 4-year-old enrollment and per student funding from the 2001-2002 school year<sup>10</sup> to the 2007-2008 school year. An overview of the state programs is provided in Appendix D.

## Florida

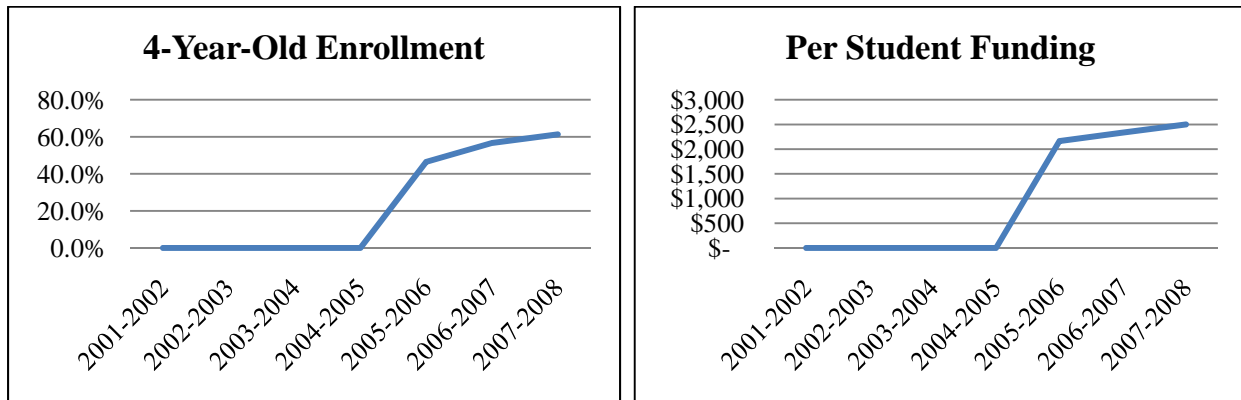
According to the NIEER, Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program is the most recently implemented, having begun in 2005. However, enrollment figures provided by the NIEER (see Appendix A) do not include the State's School Readiness Program, which was implemented six years earlier in 1999. To provide the most comprehensive information available, both programs will be discussed in this report. Florida's 4-year-old enrollment and per child funding trends for the VPK program only are provided in Figure 3.

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<sup>9</sup> According to the NIEER, providing children with a snack does not meet the one meal per day benchmark.

<sup>10</sup> Enrollment and per child funding figures for the 2003-2004 school year are not available from the NIEER at this time. The figures provided for each state represent an average of the 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 school years.

**Figure 3: Florida Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

### *Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program*

Although Florida's VPK program was implemented in 2005, the legislation which provided guidelines for the program was enacted in 2004. This program provides Florida families with two options:

- School year program;
- Summer program.

The school year program is equal to at least 540<sup>11</sup> instructional hours while the summer program must include at least 300<sup>12</sup> instructional hours. Eligible providers of the VPK program must meet or exceed the minimum requirements.<sup>13</sup> According to the minimum requirements, providers must:

- Be licensed by the State;
- Be accredited by a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation, Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation, or the Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools;
- Have at least one instructor who has met the minimum educational credentials (described below);
- Require the instructor to complete an emergent literacy training course.

The settings in which these providers offer these services include:

- Licensed child care centers;
- Licensed family child care homes;
- Accredited non-public schools;

<sup>11</sup> Florida Statutes §1002.55(2).

<sup>12</sup> Florida Statutes §1002.61(2)(a).

<sup>13</sup> Florida Statutes §1002.55(3).

- Accredited faith-based providers; and
- Public schools.

Eligible providers must also be accredited and the classes provided must have at least four but no more than 18 children. Instructors in the school year program are required to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree or equivalent (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Instructors in the summer program are required to have a bachelor's degree.

Funding for the VPK program comes from early learning coalitions<sup>14</sup> established by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. Per student funding for Florida's VPK program during the 2007-2008 school year was equal to \$2,500 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The staff-child ratio required of this program is one staff member to every ten children.

### *School Readiness Program*

The School Readiness Program was implemented in 1999 to address the educational needs of young children in Florida. In 2001, the School Readiness Program absorbed the State Migrant Prekindergarten Program and the Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program, increasing both its size and its reach to young children (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Today it serves young children aged birth to 4-years-old<sup>15</sup> who meet certain criteria.<sup>16</sup> Eligibility is determined by those:

- With families below 150 percent of the federal poverty level;
- Who are at risk for welfare dependency;
- Who are at risk of abuse or neglect;
- With parents who are migrant farm workers;
- Born to teenage parents;
- With disabilities; or
- With health care issues.

The School Readiness Program is a full-day, year long program to provide parents of young children the opportunity to work and improve their financial position (Education Law Center 2008). This program is operated by early learning coalitions established by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. Funding sources for this program include the state and federal government, lottery program, and local early education and child care funds (Education Law Center 2008). There are no specific instructor degree requirements or staff-child ratios specified for this program (Education Law Center 2008).

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<sup>14</sup> Florida Statutes §1002.71.

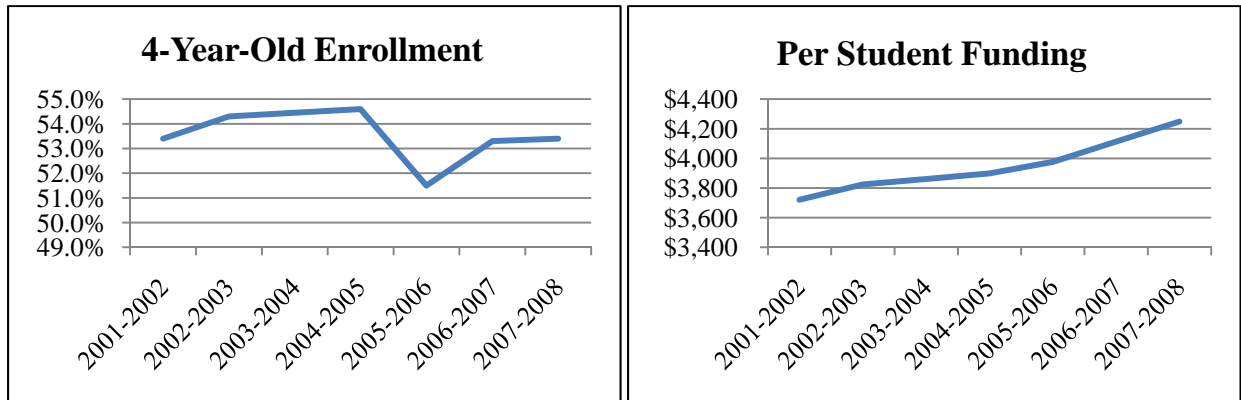
<sup>15</sup> Priority is provided to 3- and 4-year-old children.

<sup>16</sup> Florida Statute §411.01(6).

## Georgia

Georgia's Pre-K program was initiated in 1993 to aid at-risk 4-year-olds and provided universal Preschool availability to 4-year-olds two years later in 1995 (Bright from the Start 2010). This made the state the first in the nation to provide state-funded Preschool to all 4-year-old children (Education Law Center 2008). Enrollment and per child funding trends for this program are provided in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Georgia Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Accepted programs must follow the Bright from the Start Pre-K Operating Guidelines and Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The program must be in operation for 6.5 hours each weekday and run for 180 days each year (Education Law Center 2008). Providers of this program offer services in such settings as:

- Public schools;
- Head Start Programs;
- Private child care centers;
- Faith-based organizations;
- Military facilities; and
- State colleges and universities (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

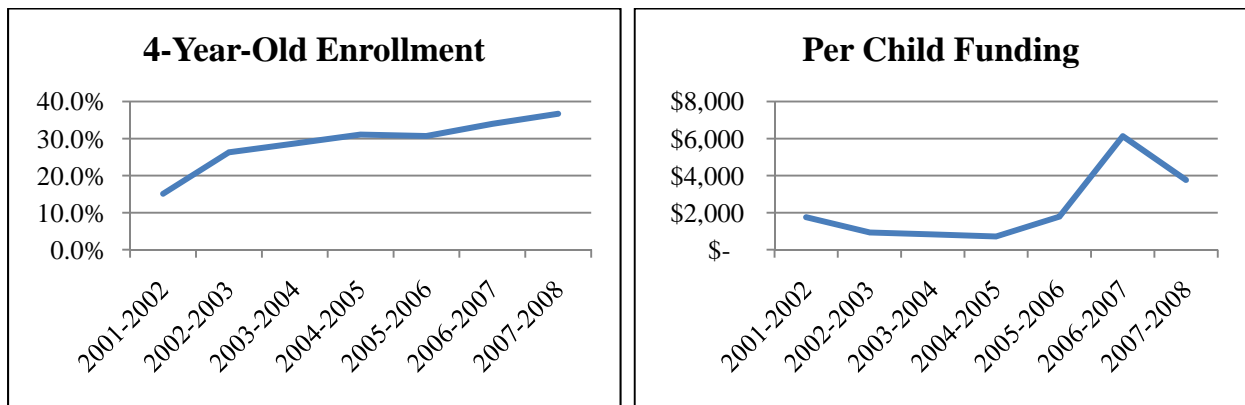
Funds for Georgia's Pre-K program are collected from state lottery proceeds.<sup>17</sup> Funding for the 2007-2008 school year for the Georgia Pre-K program was approximately \$4,249 per child. Currently, instructors in this program must hold either an Associate's degree or a Montessori diploma (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The staff-child ratio is one staff member for every ten children.

<sup>17</sup> Official Code of Georgia Annotated §50-27-2 and 50-27-3.

## Maryland

Maryland's early childhood education program, the Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP), was initiated in 1980 to serve at-risk 4-year-olds. At the time, the program was only available to children in Baltimore City and Prince George's County (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Beginning in 2002, the program was made available 4-year-olds who were eligible for free or reduced lunch or who were homeless (Education Law Center 2008). At the time, availability of the program was limited to the number of available openings. In 2007, local school districts were required to serve all eligible 4-year-olds. Enrollment and per child funding trends are provided in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Maryland Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Services provided by EEEP-certified programs may be held in many settings. These settings include:

- Public schools;
- Private child care centers;
- Head Start programs; and
- Private schools (Education Law Center 2008).

Funding is provided for the EEEP program from the school funding formula. Approximately \$3,770 per child was allocated to the EEEP for the 2007-2008 school year. This program requires teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree with the staff-child ratio set at 1:10. Maryland's EEEP program serves children for half a day.<sup>18</sup> The minimum amount of time a program may operate is 2.5 hours per day during the academic school year.

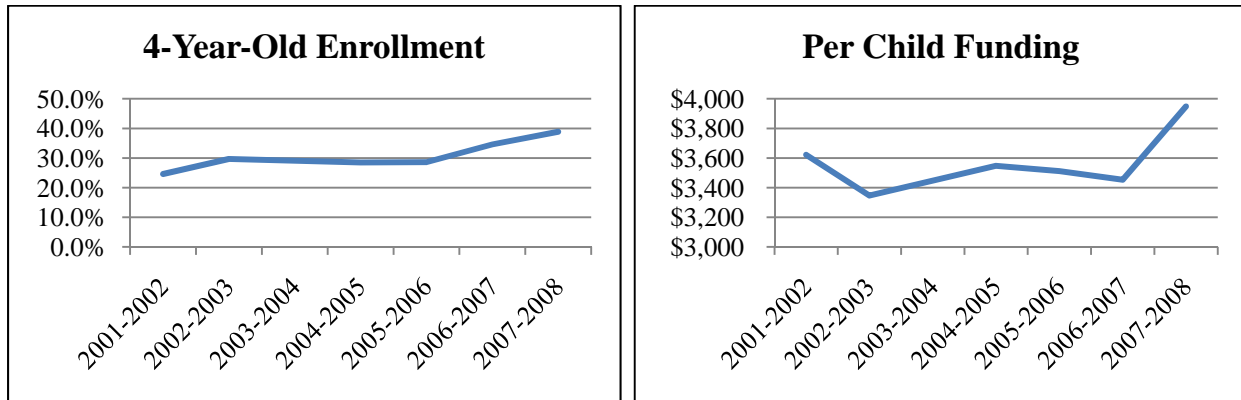
## New York

The New York Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program was implemented in 1998. In 2006, the UPK program was successfully merged with a preexisting early childhood initiative called

<sup>18</sup> Maryland Administrative Code §13A.06.02.05.

the Targeted Prekindergarten (TPK) program. The TPK program, which was implemented in 1966, provided Preschool services to low income children. As a result of the merger, every New York school district could receive state funding for the UPK program (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Enrollment and per child funding trends are provided in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: New York Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Although the program’s goal is to provide access to all 4-year-olds, this goal has not yet been realized. Due to funding shortages, 4-year-olds are selected for enrollment in the UPK program through a lottery (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). School districts where UPK programs are offered are responsible for selecting children and for providing 10 percent of the funding. Currently, the State has set a goal to provide access to all eligible children and full state funding for the UPK program by the 2010-2011 school year (Education Law Center 2008).

UPK programs may provide either half- or full-day instruction to students every weekday for 180 days.<sup>19</sup> The half day program must be in operation for at least 2.5 hours each day, and may operate a summer-only program if appropriate space is not available during the school year (Education Law Center 2008). UPK services are provided in settings including:

- Public schools;
- Private schools; and
- Private child care centers (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Teachers in public UPK programs are required to have a teaching certification and a master’s degree. Teachers in non-public UPK programs, however, are only required to hold an associate’s degree or Child Development Associate (CDA) degree. State funding for the UPK program is provided through the state aid funding formula (Education Law Center 2008). For the 2007-2008 school year, per child funding was \$3,948 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

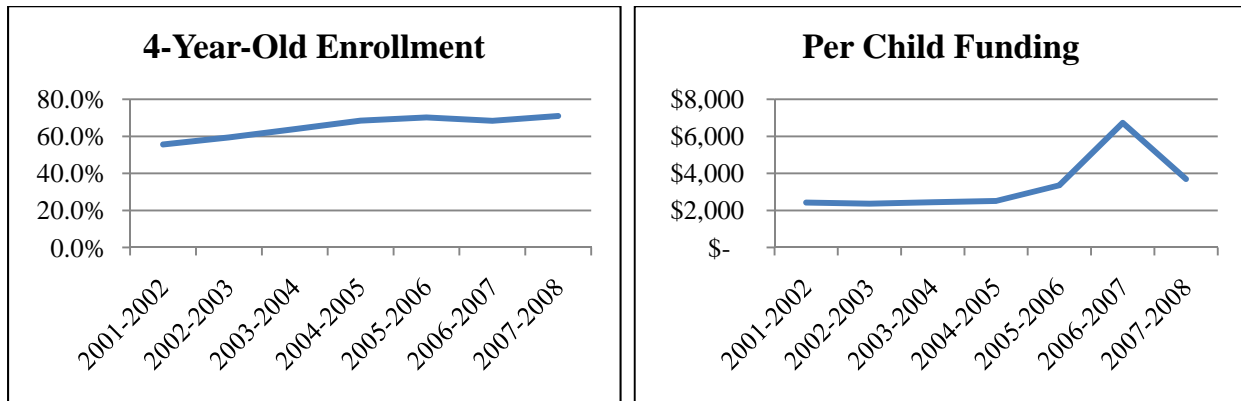
<sup>19</sup> 8 New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations (CRR) §151-1.5(b).



## Oklahoma

Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program was implemented in 1980 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Eighteen years later, the program had expanded to provide voluntary access to state-funded preschool to every 4-year-old in the State. Enrollment and per child funding trends are provided in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Oklahoma Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

The Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program can be operated as either a half- or full-day program. The half-day program must be provided for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day while the full-day program is operated for 6 hours a day.<sup>20</sup> Service providers of this program include the following settings:

- Public schools;
- Private or public early childhood education program providers;
- Public child care providers; and
- Private child care providers (Education Law Center 2008).

Funding for the program is allocated by Oklahoma's school finance formula. The amount of funding districts receive is determined by whether Preschool is offered as a half- or full-day program. For the 2007-2008 school year, per child funding for the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program was approximately \$3,966 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Teachers in this program are required to hold a bachelor's degree. Enrollment in each class must not exceed twenty children, and the required staff-child ratio is 1:10 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Children enrolled in this program are served in public schools and child care center settings. Currently, Oklahoma leads the nation in 4-year-old enrollment in state-funded Prekindergarten programs.

<sup>20</sup> 70 Oklahoma Statute §11-103.7(B).

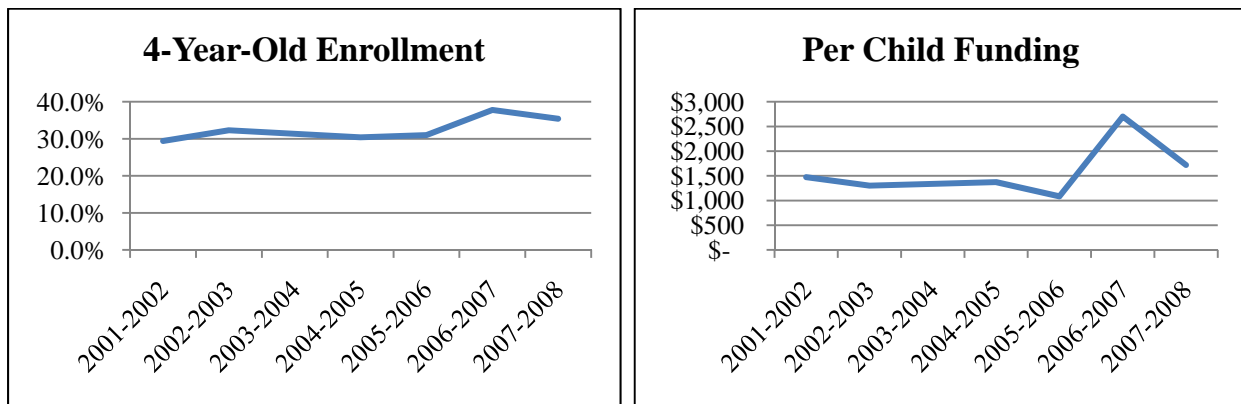
## South Carolina

South Carolina provides two early childhood education programs to young children to enhance school readiness:

- Half-Day Child Development Program (4K);
- Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP).

The combined enrollment for these two programs for the 2007-2008 school year was 35.4 percent of 4-year-olds. In that same school year, state funding per child was approximately \$1,719 total for both programs. Enrollment and per child funding trends for both programs are provided in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: South Carolina Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

### *Half-Day Child Development Program (4K)*

The Half-Day Child Development Program (4K) began 1984 after passage of the South Carolina Education Improvement Act (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). This targeted Preschool program required every district in South Carolina to provide at least one 4K class. Funding sources for this program is provided by General Assembly appropriations (Education Law Center 2008).

The 4K program services are offered to children by providers in the following settings:

- Public schools;
- Private child care providers; and
- Private Preschool providers (Education Law Center 2008).

The South Carolina 4K program is required to operate at least half a day each weekday for a minimum of 2.5 hours over a 180 day school year.<sup>21</sup> Teachers providing 4K services are required to hold at least a bachelor's degree (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The maximum number of

<sup>21</sup> South Carolina Code Regulations §43-264.1(IV)(B).

children allowed in each class is twenty, and the staff-child ratio is one staff member for every ten children.

### *Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)*

The Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) is another targeted program which was established from the ruling made in the *Abbeville County School District v. South Carolina* lawsuit (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). As a result of this lawsuit, eight districts of the Abbeville County School District must provide full-day Pre-K services for at-risk children. At-risk children include those with families who are eligible for Medicaid or haven an income below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (Education Law Center 2008). These districts are:

- Allendale;
- Dillon;
- Florence;
- Hampton;
- Jasper;
- Lee;
- Marion; and
- Orangeburg (Education Law Center 2008).

The CDEPP program requires teachers in public Preschool settings to hold at least a bachelor's degree (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Teachers in nonpublic settings, however, are only required to hold an early childhood education-specific associate's degree. As with the 4K programs, class size cannot exceed twenty children, and the staff-child ratio must maintain 1:10 or better. Funding for the CDEPP program is provided though General Assembly appropriations.

This program is provided in the following settings:

- Public schools;
- Private child care centers;
- Faith-based centers; and
- Head Start programs (Education Law Center 2008).

## **Texas**

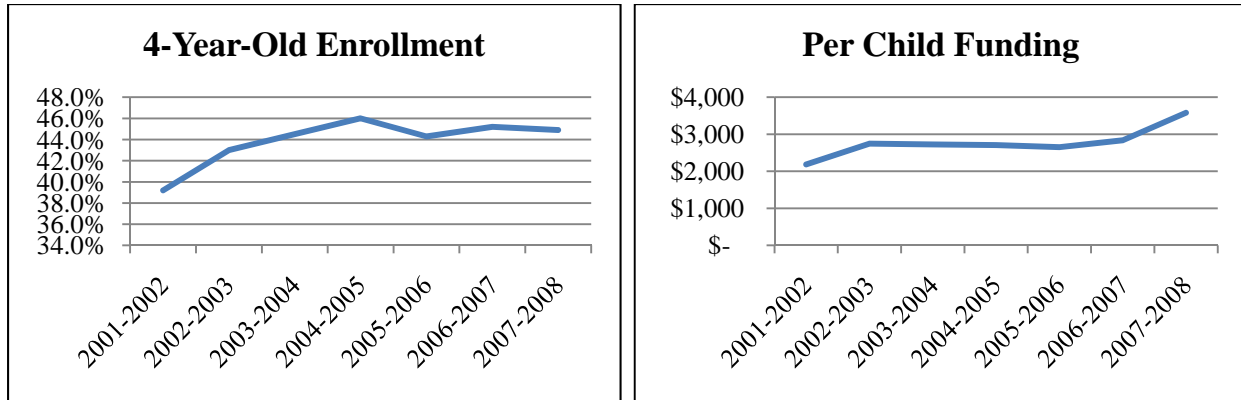
The Texas Public School Prekindergarten initiative began in 1985 to provide at-risk 4-year-olds Preschool opportunities on a half-day basis (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Eligibility requirements for children are those who:

- Qualify for the free or reduced lunch program;
- Cannot speak or understand English;
- Are homeless;
- Are children of armed forces members on active duty; or

- Are in foster care (Education Law Center 2008).

Enrollment and per child funding figures for this program are provided in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Texas Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

If a child is not eligible for the program, he or she may still be enrolled provided that the district in which the child lives accepts ineligible children and that the family pays tuition. School districts may choose to provide classes to at-risk 3-year-olds as well if additional state and local funds are available.

Funding for the Texas Public School Prekindergarten program is provided by the state school funding formula, called the Foundation School Program, and at the local (district) level (Education Law Center 2008). Funding is only initially provided for half-day<sup>22</sup> services, requiring a minimum of 3 hours per day (Education Law Center 2008). Districts can apply annually for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant Program which would provide funding for full-day Preschool classes (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Teachers in this program are required to hold a bachelor’s degree. Texas also does not specify a limit for the number of children allowed in each class, nor does the State specify a staff-child ratio. In the 2007-2008 school year, per student spending for the Texas Public School Prekindergarten initiative was \$3,581.

## Vermont

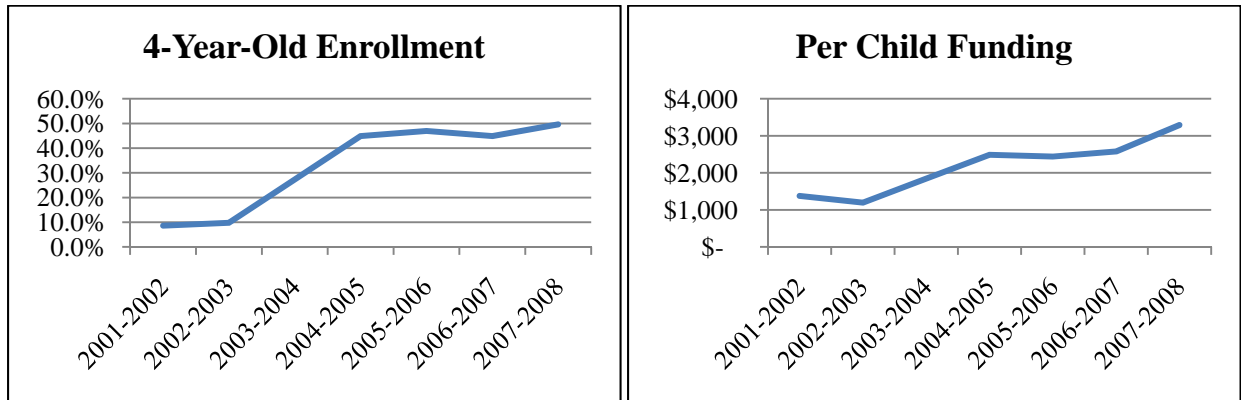
Two early childhood education initiatives are provided to 4-year-olds in Vermont:

- Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI);
- Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62.

<sup>22</sup> Texas Education Code §29.153(c).

For the 2007-2008 school year, total funding per child for both programs was \$3,290 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Collectively, these two Vermont initiatives enrolled approximately 50 percent of 4-year-olds and nearly 17 percent of 3-year-olds in 2007-2008. Enrollment and per child funding trends for both programs are provided in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Vermont Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

### *Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI)*

The Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI) was established in 1987 to provide school readiness to at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). Funding is supplied through grants<sup>23</sup> from the Vermont Department of Education. Providers submit plans for consideration to receive grant funding to operate an EEI program. To determine which providers will receive grant money, the Commissioner reviews program plans submitted by providers and analyzes them based on certain criteria. Criteria include whether the provider serves children with special needs, if the provider utilizes age appropriate and experience-based learning activities, and if the provider encourages parental involvement in the structure of the program and its setting.<sup>24</sup>

The settings in which EEI program providers operate include:

- Public schools;
- Private child care centers;
- Parent-Child Centers;
- Faith-based and family child care centers; and
- Head Start programs (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

This program requires teachers to hold a bachelor’s degree and limits the maximum class size to 16 children. The staff-child ratios are 1:8 for 3-year-olds and 1:10 for 4-year-olds (Barnett,

<sup>23</sup> Vermont Statutes Title 16 §4014.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Epstein, et al. 2008). Currently, Vermont does not specify requirements for length or duration of EEI programs (Education Law Center 2008).

### *Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62*

The second state-funded Preschool initiative in Vermont began in 2003. Originally called Publicly Funded Prekindergarten using Average Daily Membership (PFP-ADM), this initiative was established to provide state funding for districts willing to provide access to all 3- and 4-year-old children (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, PFP-ADM was renamed the Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). This program requires teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and limits the class sizes to 20 children. Unlike the EEI, the staff-child ratio is the same for 3- and 4-year-olds and is currently set at 1:10.

State funding is allocated from state lottery proceeds. The funds for this program will provide a maximum of 10 hours each week for early childhood education (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). At their discretion, each district will be responsible for providing additional funding of offer more than 10 hours per week for the program if desired. The Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62 program is offered in both public school and private child care center settings (Education Law Center 2008).

### **West Virginia**

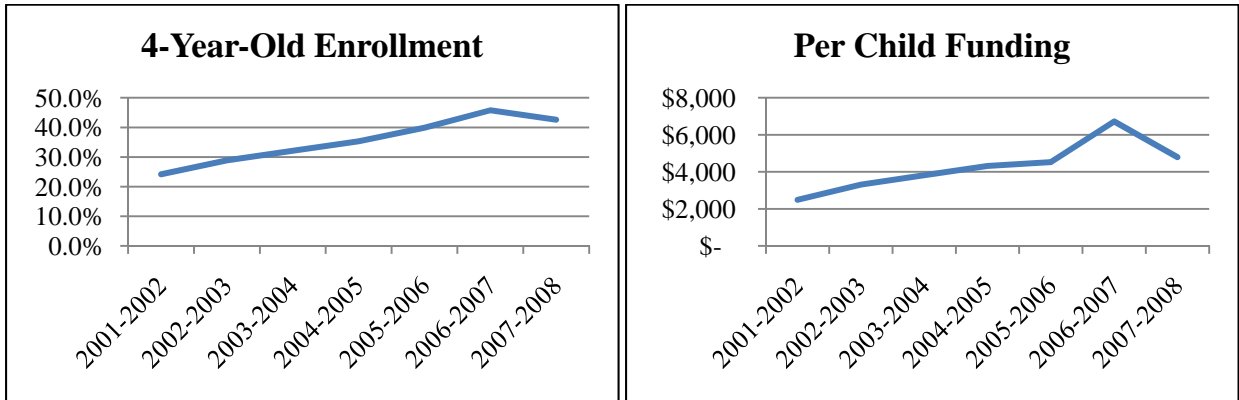
West Virginia's Universal Pre-K System, established in 1983, was originally called the Public School Early Childhood Education Initiative (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The Public School Early Childhood Education Initiative was initially made available to both 3- and 4-year-olds. In 2000, the West Virginia State Board of Education passed Policy 2525, which required universal access to all 4-year-olds in the State by the 2012-2013 school year.<sup>25</sup> The increase in 4-year-old enrollment caused difficulties to provide programs for 3-year-olds as well, and prompted the 2004 decision to only enroll 3-year-olds with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).<sup>26</sup> Enrollment and per child funding trends are provided in Figure 11.

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<sup>25</sup> West Virginia Code of State Rules §126-28-6.7.

<sup>26</sup> An IEP is a plan structured to fit a child's individual learning disabilities or disadvantages.

**Figure 11: West Virginia Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Pre-k services are provided in the following settings:

- Public schools;
- Private child care centers;
- Private Preschool programs; and
- Head Start programs (Education Law Center 2008).

While this program is primarily provided in public schools, Policy 2525 requires that half of the State's Preschool programs collaborate with private Preschool, child care centers, and Head Start programs.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of this collaboration is to aid in program expansion to reach the 2012-2013 school year access goal. Providers of the program are required to offer a minimum of 12 hours per week, but not to exceed 30 hours per week (Education Law Center 2008). The program, which is offered during the school year, must also meet for 108 days during the school year.

In the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System, teachers are required to hold either a bachelor's degree which specializes in early childhood education or a Pre-K special education degree for Pre-k only programs. For the collaborative programs or those subcontracted with other providers, an associate's degree is required. Class size is limited to twenty students with a staff-child ratio of 1:10. For the 2007-2008 school year, state funding per child was approximately \$4,793 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

## Wisconsin

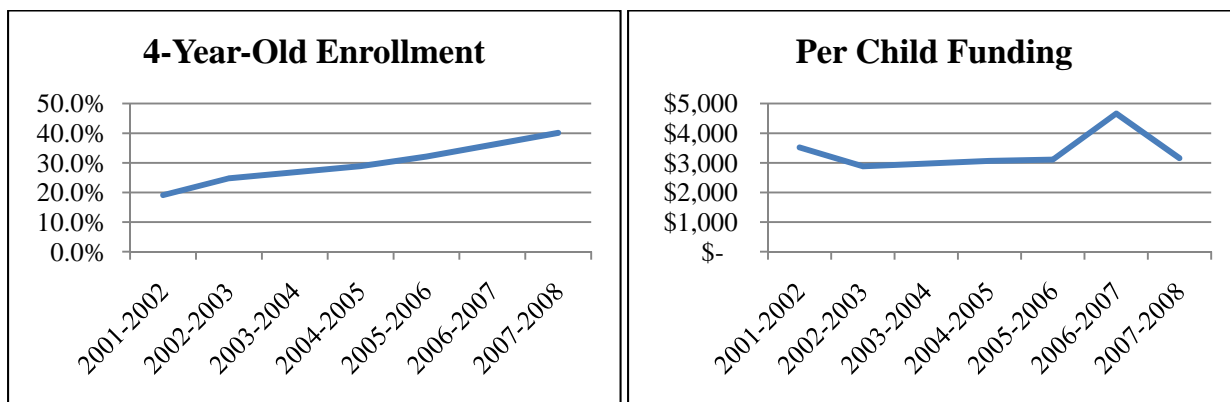
Wisconsin provides state funding for two early childhood education programs:

- Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) Program;
- Wisconsin Head Start State Supplement.

<sup>27</sup> West Virginia Code of State Rules §126-28-6.7.

Because Head Start programs are not the focus of this report, only the Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) Program will be examined in detail. Collectively, these two programs enrolled 40.1 percent of 4-year-olds and 0.7 percent of 3-year-olds in the 2007-2008 school year. Per child funding was approximately \$3,161. Enrollment and per child funding trends for both programs are provided in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Wisconsin Enrollment and per Child Funding Trends**



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Wisconsin’s Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) program was created in 1873 (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The program became state-funded in the 1920s and does not limit enrollment to at-risk children (Education Law Center 2008). However, because only 68 percent of districts in Wisconsin currently offer a 4K program, this program is not currently universally available (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Wisconsin’s 4K program services are provided in the following settings:

- Public schools;
- Private child care centers; and
- Head Start programs (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008, Education Law Center 2008).

Program providers receive state funding through the school aid funding formula to supply early childhood education services (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). This funding is to be used for a half-day program of at least 2.5 hours each day over the course of a 180 day school year.<sup>28</sup> Districts can obtain additional funding through Title I, IEA, and child care subsidies (Education Law Center 2008).

Teachers in the Wisconsin 4K program are required to hold a bachelor’s degree. The State does not specify a limit or staff-child ratio for 3-year-olds and allows localities to determine the limit and staff-child ratios for 4-year-old classes (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Wisconsin Statutes §121.02(1)(f).



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER STUDY

Although the benefits of providing young children with early education have been extensively studied in recent decades, data shows that nearly 40 percent of children 3 to 5 years of age were not enrolled in a nursery school, Preschool, or Kindergarten program<sup>29</sup> in 2008 (Kids Count 2009). As of the 2007-2008 school year, only 24 percent of 4-year-olds and 3.6 percent of 3-year-olds in thirty-eight states in the United States were enrolled in a state-funded Preschool program (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008).

Due to the many benefits of early childhood education programs in preparing children for successful school careers and improving the overall benefits to society, more emphasis should be placed on universal access in state policies. Of the programs studied in this report, the access trends were disproportionately in favor of targeted Preschool programs. Half of these programs offer state-funded early childhood education services to at-risk children only. While these children are the most likely to benefit, other children should not be excluded (Ackerman, et al. 2009, Gelbach and Pritchett 2002). It is recommended that all states be encouraged on a national level to implement early childhood education policies with goals in place to achieve universal access status.

State policies should also reflect the importance of these programs by providing adequate funding, based on the educational needs of children and necessary funds for program operation, to give all 4-year-old children the opportunity of an early education. Currently, only six states provide funding for early childhood education programs solely through the school funding formula. By funding Preschool through school funding formulas, the early childhood education programs are always receiving funding based on the formula criteria. Other states fund Preschool programs with state lottery proceeds and other mixed sources. However, the amount of funding provided by these sources tends to fluctuate. It is recommended that state policies more clearly define funding sources for early childhood education programs. Further, it is recommended that better and more consistent funding sources be evaluated.

Preschool program successes have been sporadically documented. The *State of Preschool Yearbook* provided by the NIEER since 2003 outlines early childhood education programs in each state. However, not every early childhood education program is included. In the 2008 *Yearbook*, Florida's School Readiness Program was only briefly mentioned, but not examined in any detail. It is recommended that more comprehensive studies inclusive of all early childhood education programs in each state be conducted and the information compiled into a detailed annual report.

The NIEER's *State of Preschool Yearbook* series analyzes programs based on ten different benchmarks such as early learning standards, required teacher degrees, maximum class size, and staff-child ratios (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). However, this report stands alone in the way it analyzes the overall quality of early childhood education programs. More comprehensive study

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<sup>29</sup> According to Kids Count, "nursery school" and "Preschool" include children enrolled in federal, state, or local early childhood education initiatives, including Head Start programs.

is needed to analyze the success and quality of all available state-funded early childhood education programs.

## CONCLUSION

This report has examined the state policies which govern access and funding of early childhood education programs. While several states have established solid foundations to provide all (or nearly all) 4-year-old children the opportunity to attend an early childhood education program, more policies still need to be implemented. The funding models of state-funded Preschool programs should be more consistent and stable, so that fluctuations in such variables such as lottery proceeds do not negatively affect available funding.

According to the results of this study, considering access, funding, enrollment, and quality standard benchmarks, the Oklahoma Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program appears to be the best implemented. This program has the highest enrollment of 4-year-olds of any state in the United States currently and provides universal, voluntary access. The program funding model is the State's school funding formula, which guarantees funding for the initiative every year. Along with Maryland's Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP), Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program has met nine<sup>30</sup> of the ten benchmarks for quality standards as established by the NIEER.

The program which seems to have shown the most improvement is Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK). In just three years after implementation, enrollment in VPK included over 61 percent of 4-year-olds in the State (Barnett, Epstein, et al. 2008). The program provides universal access to 4-year-olds in the state and has funding established through early learning coalitions. However, the program has only met a total of four quality standard benchmarks. Florida should continue to develop the quality of the VPK program and explore improved funding models for future successes.

State-funded early childhood education programs have made great improvements over the past decade. In the future, more research should be conducted to determine the best practices for state access and funding models. The national government could also become more involved in the program initiatives and provide research and guidance on state early childhood education policies. The proven benefits and successes of such programs should encourage those states without current programs – or those who only serve a small percentage of economically disadvantaged children – to provide early education initiatives for all children.

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<sup>30</sup> Neither the EEEP nor the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program has met the benchmark for assistant teachers holding a CDA or equivalent degree. Further, no program studied in this report has met that benchmark as of the 2007-2008 school year.

### Appendix A: State 4-Year-Old Preschool Enrollment

State	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004 <sup>a</sup>	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Florida	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	46.5%	56.7%	61.3%
Georgia	53.4%	54.3%	54.5%	54.6%	51.5%	53.3%	53.4%
Maryland	15.1%	26.3%	28.7%	31.1%	30.7%	34.0%	36.7%
New York	24.6%	29.7%	29.1%	28.5%	28.6%	34.6%	38.9%
Oklahoma	55.6%	59.4%	64.0%	68.5%	70.2%	68.4%	71.0%
South Carolina	29.4%	32.3%	31.4%	30.4%	31.0%	37.8%	35.4%
Texas	39.2%	43.0%	44.5%	46.0%	44.3%	45.2%	44.9%
Vermont	8.6%	9.8%	27.4%	44.9%	47.0%	44.9%	49.6%
West Virginia	24.2%	28.9%	32.1%	35.3%	39.9%	45.8%	42.6%
Wisconsin	19.1%	24.8%	26.9%	28.9%	32.1%	36.1%	40.1%

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

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<sup>a</sup> The 2003-2004 school year was not available from this source. The figures shown represent an average of the 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 school years.

### Appendix B: State per Child Preschool Spending

State	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004 <sup>b</sup>	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Florida	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,163	\$ 2,335	\$ 2,500
Georgia	\$ 3,721	\$ 3,824	\$ 3,862	\$ 3,899	\$ 3,977	\$ 4,114	\$ 4,249
Maryland	\$ 1,751	\$ 936	\$ 829	\$ 721	\$ 1,787	\$ 6,132	\$ 3,770
New York	\$ 3,622	\$ 3,347	\$ 3,448	\$ 3,548	\$ 3,512	\$ 3,454	\$ 3,948
Oklahoma	\$ 2,428	\$ 2,368	\$ 2,443	\$ 2,517	\$ 3,364	\$ 6,731	\$ 3,699
South Carolina	\$ 1,473	\$ 1,303	\$ 1,339	\$ 1,374	\$ 1,085	\$ 2,702	\$ 1,719
Texas	\$ 2,186	\$ 2,746	\$ 2,727	\$ 2,707	\$ 2,653	\$ 2,836	\$ 3,581
Vermont	\$ 1,379	\$ 1,197	\$ 1,843	\$ 2,488	\$ 2,439	\$ 2,577	\$ 3,290
West Virginia	\$ 2,486	\$ 3,309	\$ 3,816	\$ 4,323	\$ 4,529	\$ 6,724	\$ 4,793
Wisconsin	\$ 3,518	\$ 2,881	\$ 2,973	\$ 3,065	\$ 3,108	\$ 4,665	\$ 3,161

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

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<sup>b</sup> The 2003-2004 school year was not available from this source. The figures shown represent an average of the 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 school years.

### Appendix C: Program Quality Standards by State

Benchmark	FL	GA	MD	NY	OK	SC		TX	VT		WV	WI
	4K	Pre-K	EEEP	UPK	4-Yr-Old	4K	CDEPP	Pre-K	EEI	Act 62	UPK	4K
Comprehensive	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bachelor's degree			X		X	X		X	X	X		X
Specializing in Pre-K		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CDA or equivalent												
At least 15 hours per year		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
At most 20	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
1:10 or better	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Screening services		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
At least 1 per day		X	X		X		X					
Site visits	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

### Appendix D: State Pre-K Program Comparisons

Program	Year Established	Type of Program	Degree Requirements	Funding Source	Settings of Services Offered
<b>Florida (2)</b>					
Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK)	2005	Universal	Child Development Associate (CDA); bachelor's degree	Early learning coalitions established by the Agency for Workforce Innovation	Licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, accredited non-public schools, accredited faith-based providers, and public schools
School Readiness Program	1999	Targeted	None specified	State, federal, lottery, and local early education and child care funds	Public schools, private child care centers, Title I programs, subsidized child care programs, Florida First Start, and Head Start programs
<b>Georgia (3)</b>					
Georgia Pre-K	1993	Universal	Associate's degree; Montessori diploma	State lottery program	Public schools, Head Start programs, private child care centers, faith-based organizations, military facilities, and state colleges and universities
<b>Maryland (9)</b>					
Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP)	1980	Targeted	Bachelor's degree	School funding formula	Public schools, private child care centers, Head Start programs, and private schools
<b>New York (8)</b>					
Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK)	1998	Semi-Universal	Master's degree; Child Development Associate (CDA)	School aid funding formula	Public schools, private schools, and private child care centers

## Appendix D: State Pre-K Program Comparisons

Program	Year	Type of Program	Degree Requirements	Funding Source	Settings of Services Offered
<b>Oklahoma (1)</b>					
Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program	1980	Universal	Bachelor's degree	School funding formula	Public schools, private or public early childhood education program providers, and public or private child care providers
<b>South Carolina (10)</b>					
Half-Day Child Development Program (4K)	1984	Targeted	Bachelor's degree	General Assembly appropriations	Public schools, private child care providers, and private Preschool providers
Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)	2006	Targeted	Bachelor's degree; associate's degree (ECE focus)	General Assembly appropriations	Public schools, private child care centers, faith-based centers, and Head Start programs
<b>Texas (5)</b>					
Texas Public School Prekindergarten	1985	Targeted	Bachelor's degree	School aid formula and local funding	Public schools and child care centers
<b>Vermont (4)</b>					
Vermont Early Education Initiative (EEI)	1987	Targeted	Bachelor's degree	State grants	Public schools, private child care centers, Parent-Child Centers, faith-based and family child care centers, and Head Start programs
Vermont Prekindergarten Education-Act 62	2003	Semi-Universal	Bachelor's degree	State lottery program	Public schools and private child care centers

### Appendix D: State Pre-K Program Comparisons

Program	Year	Type of Program	Degree Requirements	Funding Source	Settings of Services Offered
<b>West Virginia (6)</b>					
West Virginia Universal Pre-K System	1983	Semi-Universal	Bachelor's degree (ECE focus); Pre-K SpEd degree; associate's degree	School funding formula	Public schools, private child care centers, private Preschool programs, and Head Start programs
<b>Wisconsin (7)</b>					
Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) Program	1873	Semi-Universal	Bachelor's degree	School aid funding formula	Public schools, private child care centers, and Head Start programs



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