



Spotlight: Oklahoma



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Oklahoma's universal pre-K program is the oldest in the country. The program launched in 1980 as the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program and expanded in 1998 to become a universal pre-K program.

Summary

Oklahoma ranks 20th in the country for child poverty, and program administrators wanted to ensure that all of the state's children experienced early investments in their education and success. The program was built out to ensure nearly every school district would offer the program to all eligible preschool-age children.

Program Impact

Researchers at the National Institute for Early Education Research found that 99% of school districts offer pre-K across the state and that approximately 73% of Oklahoma's 4-year-olds are enrolled. These numbers mean Oklahoma ranks fourth in the country for access, and the numerous cross-sector partnerships for providing pre-K programming enable 87% of enrolled children to attend full-day programs.

Continuing the Work

Strong universal pre-K programs can complement efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect by diminishing risk factors, such as social isolation, while improving protective factors, such as access to quality education and a supportive school community.

Oklahoma's experience with expanding universal access while ensuring quality has contributed to improved school readiness and academic performance for the state's young children across different demographics. The program's key outcomes, including family and community engagement and improved academic performance, contribute to broader efforts to build healthier communities and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Oklahoma: Parent Coaching and Assistance Through Universal Pre-K

Community Action Project (CAP) Tulsa, one of the leading early childhood education agencies operating universal pre-K in Oklahoma, works closely with parents to prepare young children for academic success and also designs programming to bolster parenting skills, employability, and earning potential for families in the program.

"Literacy nights happened every quarter in room 8; my little, wise owls brought their whole family. Together, they took part in games and activities that made letter sounds and early reading fun. Families warmly welcomed me into their homes for our bi-annual home visits. During these visits we shared coffee, listened to the kids share their talents, and spent time creating a personalized vision for their child's pre-kindergarten year."

—Olivia Turner, former CAP Tulsa teacher



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