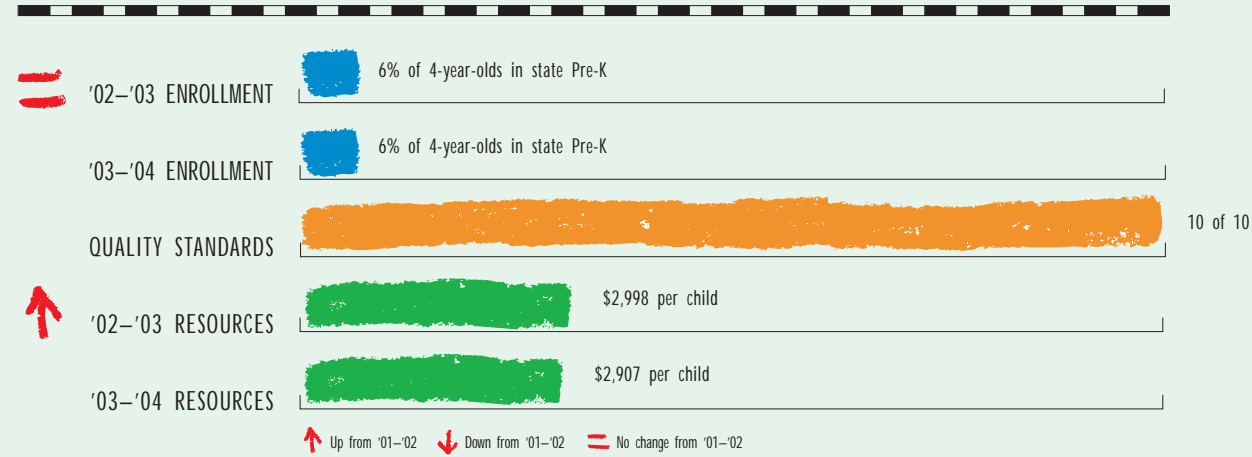


# Arkansas



The Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program started in 1991 as part of a state initiative supported by a dedicated sales tax for the Educational Excellence Trust Fund. Since 2001, the program has been funded in part by 80 percent of the monies received through an excise tax on package beer. In addition, localities are required to provide matching funds equal to 40 percent of total funding. While the majority of programs operate in public schools, the state also provides direct funding to Head Start agencies, private child care centers, universities, education cooperatives, community mental health centers, and developmental disability centers. Children from birth to age 5 are eligible to participate if they are from low-income families or at risk due to abuse or neglect, low birth weight, limited English proficiency, or other circumstances.

A recent ABC task force recommendation identified core quality components, established a clear unit rate per child, and specified that children in center-based programs should receive at least 7.5 hours of services per day. The model also brought teacher and aide salaries in line with compensation for these positions in public schools.

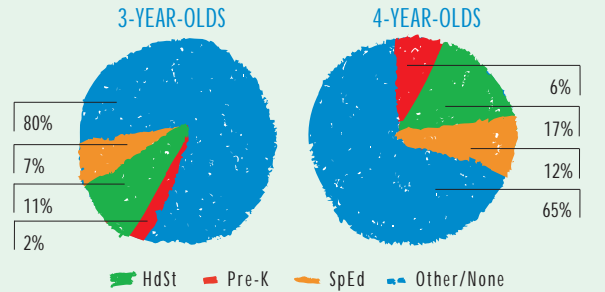
With \$8,972,517 in state funds for center-based ABC programs, 862 3-year-olds and 2,224 4-year-olds were enrolled during the 2003–2004 school year. As part of a broader education reform measure that was adopted in response to a school finance equity ruling, Arkansas recently passed legislation that will greatly expand the availability of prekindergarten. Starting in 2004–2005, the state will provide \$40 million in new funds. Districts that have at least 75 percent of their children scoring below proficient levels in literacy and math on the State Benchmark exams and children in schools that have been designated as being in school improvement status will receive priority for funding.



## ACCESS

Total state program enrollment	3,086 <sup>1</sup>
School districts that offer state program	63% <sup>2</sup>
Income requirement	156% FPL <sup>3</sup>
Hours of operation	Full-day, full-week
Operating schedule	Academic year
Special education enrollment	6,694
Federally funded Head Start enrollment	10,283
State-funded Head Start enrollment	0

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



## QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

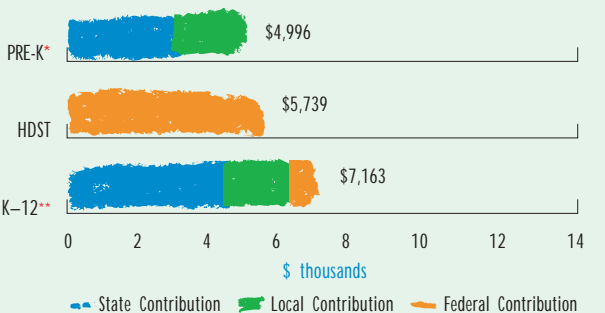
POLICY	STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT	BENCHMARK	DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
Curriculum standards	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher degree requirement	BA	BA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher specialized training requirement	P-4 teacher license <sup>4</sup>	Specializing in Pre-K	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistant teacher degree requirement	CDA	CDA or equivalent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teacher in-service requirement	30 clock hours	At least 15 hours/year	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Maximum class size		20 or lower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds	20		
4-year-olds	20		
Staff-child ratio		1:10 or better	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3-year-olds	1:10		
4-year-olds	1:10		
Screening/referral requirements	Vision, hearing, and health	Vision, hearing, and health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Required support services	1 parent conference and support services <sup>5</sup>	At least 1 service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Meal requirement	Lunch and snack	At least 1/day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



## RESOURCES

Total state Pre-K spending	\$9,250,285 <sup>6</sup>
Local match required?	Yes—40% of total funding
State spending per child enrolled	\$2,998
State spending per 3-year-old	\$70
State spending per 4-year-old	\$184

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED



\* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

\*\* K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.

Data are for the '02-'03 school year, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> This enrollment figure only includes children in the center-based component of the program. ABC also has a home-based component, but the enrollment for this component is not included here.

<sup>2</sup> Programs are offered in 68 out of 75 (91%) counties.

<sup>3</sup> This is equivalent to an income of \$23,523 for a family of three.

<sup>4</sup> The P-4 teacher license covers birth to fourth grade.

<sup>5</sup> Support services include education services or job training for parents, parenting support or training, parent involvement activities, health services for children, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and transition to kindergarten activities. Funding specific to parent engagement is included in the Core Quality Component model for ABC programs. Home visits, however, are not required.

<sup>6</sup> This figure represents spending on the center-based component of the ABC program.