

Types of Pre-K in Mississippi

Everything you need to know about state-funded pre-K, Head Start, licensed childcare, and other pre-K programs.

MISSISSIPPI
FIRST

State-Funded Pre-K

“**State-funded pre-K**” refers to pre-K programs established by the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013* (see Appendix A). These programs, known as “ELCs,” operate in 18 communities and serve 3,000 students as of 2019. All collaboratives are overseen by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), even though individual providers may also have other oversight agencies.

Distinguishing Features

- **Collaboration:** To be eligible for state funding, all collaboratives are required to have two or more partners, including at least one school district and at least one Head Start, if one exists within the county. Collaboratives can also include private childcare centers and private or parochial schools. These partners form a collaborative council and select a Lead Partner, who serves as the fiscal agent of the collaborative. The Lead Partner coordinates a joint application for state funding. More information about the collaborative council can be found in Mississippi First’s [How to Start a Collaborative](#).
- **State Tax Credit:** Individuals or corporations who make a contribution to support the local matching fund of an approved early learning collaborative may be eligible to receive a state tax credit for the donated amount up to \$1 million. The Mississippi Department of Revenue can approve 1:1 tax credits up to the amount the legislature appropriates to collaboratives each year. For example, in 2018, the legislature appropriated \$6.5 million; therefore, the 2018 donations eligible for the credit may not exceed \$6.5 million. See Appendix B for more information.
- **Competitive Application:** The program is competitive and has had only three application cycles, in 2013, 2016, and 2018. New application cycles depend on the legislature increasing the funding for the program or on the closure of a current collaborative.

Visit mississippifirst.org for more information about pre-K in Mississippi.

125 S. Congress Street
Suite 1510
Jackson, MS 39201
mississippifirst.org



State-Funded Pre-K



POPULATION SERVED

Any child who has attained the age of four on or before September 1 of the school year is eligible to attend state-funded pre-K, where available, unless the matching funds' source or a specific provider imposes additional restrictions. For example, a collaborative's students attending a Head Start must still meet Head Start's income guidelines.

FUNDING

Approved collaboratives receive state funding to operate full-day or half-day programs. The funding amounts to \$4,300 per child enrolled in full-day programs and \$2,150 per child enrolled in half-day programs. The State of Mississippi provides half of these costs (\$2,150 per child enrolled in full-day pre-K and \$1,075 per child enrolled in half-day pre-K). The state requires that the other half be provided by local matching funds, which may include local tax dollars, federal dollars (as allowed), tuition, philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities, equipment, and services required as part of the program, such as food service or health screenings. Most often, matching funds come from the federal Title I program or from philanthropic contributions.



Collaborative pre-K programs are required to meet the highest levels of quality, as defined by meeting 10 of 10 of the 2013 quality benchmarks by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). In addition, collaboratives must help students become kindergarten ready according to child outcome data.

QUALITY

MDE is tasked with ensuring quality through an annual effectiveness evaluation. Collaboratives, and each provider within a collaborative, must meet a minimum score on this evaluation to continue in the state-funded program. The effectiveness evaluation combines child outcome data from the kindergarten-readiness assessment (MKAS²), the comprehensive early learning assessment (Brigance Early Childhood Screen III (3-5)), and a measure of classroom quality (CLASS). The effectiveness evaluation requires MDE to annually complete on-site monitoring to determine the collaborative's adherence to program standards (the *Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year Old Children* as well as the NIEER benchmarks) and to conduct CLASS observations in each collaborative.



Any collaborative program that uses Title I dollars must also follow the *Title I, Part A – Basic Guidelines*. Head Start or blended programs within a collaborative must additionally follow the *Head Start Performance Standards*. Childcare providers who participate in collaboratives must be licensed by the state unless they are exempted by § 43-20-5 of the Mississippi Code. Providers must also “select and utilize a nationally recognized assessment tool, approved by the State Department of Education, designed to document classroom quality.” Because the CLASS evaluation is used by MDE to monitor all collaboratives, childcare providers within collaboratives may use the MDE CLASS observations to satisfy this requirement, provided that the childcare provider meets the minimum score on the CLASS. Other tools that can be used include the ECERS-R, FCCERS-R, PQA, PQA-FCC, ELLCO, and CHELLO. If a childcare provider wishes to use an alternate assessment tool, it must receive prior approval from MDE.

Head Start

Head Start is a program of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. Every county in Mississippi has at least one Head Start center. Currently, Mississippi has 18 Head Start grantees serving over 22,000 four-year-olds.



POPULATION SERVED

90% of Head Start children in a given center must be at or below 100% of federal poverty guidelines. Head Start centers must also serve children with disabilities.

FUNDING

Head Start centers are funded by a federal grant awarded directly to local nonprofits. Head Start center grantees received approximately \$9,003 per child in the 2017-2018 school year. The state has no official role in funding Head Start centers that are not part of the state-funded pre-K program.



QUALITY



The federal Office of Head Start monitors the quality of local Head Start centers using the *Head Start Performance Standards* set forth in the *Head Start Act of 2007*. In addition to meeting program standards, Head Start requires that programs use a quality measure, such as CLASS. Head Start grantees who consistently fail to meet standards are required to “re-compete” for their grants. The state has no official role in managing or evaluating Head Start centers that are not also part of the state-funded pre-K program.

More information about Head Start can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>.
For more information about Head Start in Mississippi, visit <http://msheadstart.org/>.

125 S. Congress Street, Suite 1510
Jackson, MS 39201
mississippifirst.org



Licensed Childcare

A licensed childcare center provides supervised care to children of any age for which the facility is licensed by the State Department of Health. Examples include childcare centers located in church facilities or private businesses. Some Head Start centers must also be licensed, if not affiliated with an educational institution such as a public school. Most, but not all, counties in Mississippi have licensed childcare centers.



POPULATION SERVED

Children of any age or income can be served by licensed childcare centers, provided that the center is licensed for the population served.

FUNDING

Most Mississippi licensed childcare centers charge tuition to cover their expenses as most are for-profit, private businesses. Some nonprofit childcare centers may subsidize tuition through donations. If a licensed childcare center is part of a state-funded collaborative, they receive state funds. If a licensed childcare center is qualified to accept childcare certificates (known as vouchers), these can offset the cost of tuition for the child holding the certificate.



QUALITY



Childcare centers serving more than six unrelated children must be licensed by the State Department of Health to operate in Mississippi. Licensure guidelines are primarily focused on health and safety. In the past, Mississippi had a five-star, multi-pronged quality rating and improvement system operated by the Department of Human Services. This system was voluntary and served only about 30% of licensed childcare centers at its peak. Today, Mississippi has a two-tier system that rates centers as “basic” or “comprehensive.” This system is also voluntary; however, it has not been implemented yet.

To learn more about licensed childcare in Mississippi, visit <https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/static/30,0,183.html>.

125 S. Congress Street
Suite 1510
Jackson, MS 39201
mississippifirst.org

MISSISSIPPI
FIRST

Other Public School Pre-K

“Other public school pre-K programs” refers to pre-K programs that are operated by a Mississippi public school district, including a charter school. Districts may offer six types of other public school pre-K programs, if they choose, categorized mainly by the funding source and its related restrictions, including Title I, local district, tuition-based, blended, hybrid, or externally funded programs. See “funding” for more information about these types.



POPULATION SERVED

Any child who has attained the age of four on or before September 1 of the pre-K year is eligible to attend public school pre-K, where available, unless the specific pre-K program’s funding source imposes additional restrictions. For example, children enrolled in public school pre-K programs supported through Title I dollars must also meet Title I eligibility requirements.

FUNDING

Public School Pre-K Funding Types, Aside from the State-Funded Program

- Title I:** All funds utilized to support this program come from the federal Title I program. Title I pre-K programs are typically located on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district.
- Local District:** District dollars are utilized to support these programs. These programs are typically located on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district.
- Tuition-Based:** Tuition paid by parents of enrolled children supports these programs. These programs are typically located on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district.
- Blended Head Start:** Title I and Head Start dollars are blended to support these programs. These programs may be located either on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district or at a local Head Start agency.
- Hybrid:** These programs are funded by multiple sources, such as Title I and IDEA, district dollars and tuition, external sources and Title I, etc. These programs may be located on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district or in a donated space (e.g., apartment complex).
- Externally Funded:** These programs are funded by sources outside of the school district, excluding Head Start funds. Examples of externally funded pre-K programs are those that are funded through grants, private donations, and nonprofit organizations. These programs may be located on campus at one or more elementary schools in a given district or in a donated space (e.g., apartment complex).



QUALITY

All public school programs, regardless of the funding source, must follow the *Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children* and are monitored by the Office of Early Childhood at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). MDE is committed to ensuring that all public school pre-K programs meet the 10 NIEER quality benchmarks, which are being phased into the *MDE Guidelines*. Other quality standards that public school pre-K programs follow are listed below:

- Any public school pre-K program funded in whole or in part with Title I dollars must follow U.S. Department of Education guidance, including *Title I Part A – Basic Guidelines*.
- Any public school pre-K program funded in part with Head Start dollars must also follow the *Head Start Performance Standards*.

