Additional Programs Serving Young Children

**OPAT**

Oklahoma Parents as Teachers (OPAT) is a home visitation program for families with children birth through age three that is operated by the local school district. The first year of funding for OPAT was 1992 with a funding amount of $600,000. The table below shows the last three years of funding as well as the number of districts and the number of families served.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Funding Level</th>
<th>Number of Districts</th>
<th>Families Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>2,045,709</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
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<td>2007-08</td>
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<td>2,045,709</td>
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**SoonerStart**

SoonerStart is Oklahoma’s early intervention program designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The program is a joint effort of the Oklahoma Departments of Education, Health, Human Services, Mental Health Services, the Commission on Children and Youth, and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. Infants and toddlers through 36 months of age who have developmental delays or have a physical or a mental condition (such as Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy, Autism) that will most likely cause a developmental delay are eligible for SoonerStart services. There is no direct cost to families for these services, regardless of their income. This program is mandated by federal and state law and is funded through various state and federal sources.

**Early Childhood Pilot Program**

The Early Childhood Pilot Program provides comprehensive, full-day, full-year services for at-risk children aged zero to four. Ten million dollars in state funds have been appropriated by the legislature and is matched by fifteen million dollars from the private sector. State regulations require the employment of bachelor-degreed, certified teachers and family support workers for all enrolled children.

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**Three-Year-Old Public School Classrooms**

While not a state-funded program, 148 elementary level sites in 110 Oklahoma public school districts provide a classroom program for three-year-old children. 922 of these students are enrolled in a half-day program, and 1,269 three-year-old students are enrolled in a full-day program.
Kindergarten in 2010-11

Number of Children Enrolled
- Half-day: 3,853
- Full-day: 48,259
- Total Enrollment: 52,112

Staff
- Early childhood-certified teacher with:
  - Bachelor’s degree
  - State teacher salary/fringe benefits
  - Assistant teacher

Funding
- 1.3: Half-day weight
- 1.5: Full-day weight

Class Size
- Adult/Child ratio: 1:20
- Maximum class size of 20

Around 75% of Oklahoma’s four-year-olds attend public school Pre-Kindergarten.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten has significant effects on the academic readiness of Oklahoma’s public school four-year-olds.

- The Effects of Universal Pre-K on Cognitive Development, Georgetown University

History of Oklahoma Pre-Kindergarten

1975
- Legislation mandated for all schools to provide half-day kindergarten for children aged 4 or before September 1.
- Rules for Pre-K were developed in coordination with child care and Head Start.

1980
- State Funded Grant Program for students aged 4 on or before September 1. Ten school districts participated.
- Rules for Pre-K were developed in coordination with child care and Head Start.

1990
- Education Reform Act of 1990:
  - Mandated attendance for half-day kindergarten programs.
  - Moved funds from state grants into the State Aid Formula, providing funding for those students who met Head Start income eligibility guidelines. Other students were served on a sliding-scale tuition basis.
  - All early childhood teachers were required to be bachelor-degree and certified specifically in early childhood education.

1993
- The Kindergarten Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) Program was established.
- Oklahoma Parents as Teachers was established with limited state funding.

1995
- Pre-Kindergarten PASS established.
- House Bill 1657 provided state funding for all four-year-old children aged 4 on or before September 1 when Pre-K funding moved into the State Aid Formula. Pre-K is now funded as a grade-level.
- Attendance is voluntary.

1998
- All 4-year-olds are eligible to attend school when Pre-K funding moved into the State Aid Formula. Pre-K is now funded as a grade-level.

2003
- The first Georgetown Research Study of Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Oklahoma showed significant impact of Pre-K on the language development of young children.

2005
- In December of 2005, NIEER* released its results of Oklahoma’s Pre-K program, confirming the findings of Georgetown University.
- Senate Bill 982 required districts to offer full-day kindergarten by the 2011-12 school year. Mandatory attendance for half-day kindergarten.
- The state legislature appropriated ten million dollars to match twenty million in private funding in state funds for The Early Childhood Pilot Program private-public partner which will serve at-risk children aged birth to four.
- Mandatory attendance for only half-day kindergarten.

Standards
- The early childhood curriculum Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) standards are designed to attend to the needs and individual differences among children. Through themes of interest, all areas of the standards are integrated. Students experience an active learning environment arranged in learning centers which include art, science, reading, dramatic play, blocks, technology, and math.

By the 2011-12 school year, all Oklahoma districts must offer full-day kindergarten. (Kindergarten is only mandated half-day; full-day is offered for families who wish to participate.)

A balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated experiences allow for both large group and small group play. Research indicates that children who play learn to regulate their own emotions and ideas, take more initiative, engage in higher-level thinking, and develop an understanding of symbolic relationships that are a precursor to reading and mathematical thinking.

All children benefit from Oklahoma’s public school Pre-Kindergarten regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnic background.

- The Effects of Oklahoma’s Pre-K Program on Young Children’s School Readiness, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)*