

Kansas

Background

Kansas funds two pre-K programs: the State Pre-Kindergarten Program (SPP) and the Kansas Preschool Program (KPP).

State Pre-Kindergarten Program (SPP)

SPP, previously known as Four-Year-Old At-Risk, is a half-day pre-K program for at-risk four-year-olds who meet one or more of eight risk criteria for eligibility (including poverty, migrant status, and limited English proficiency, among others).¹

The Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) administers SPP through the school funding formula. Only public school districts are eligible to receive SPP funding, but they can subcontract pre-K services to public or private agencies.²

Kansas Preschool Program (KPP)

KPP is a half-day program for four-year-olds. At least 50 percent of students enrolled in KPP must meet high-risk criteria, similar to SPP's criteria.³ The Kansas Department of Education administers KPP as a competitive grant program. Consortia of pre-K providers, including home-based, center-based, and school-based pre-K environments (including charter schools), are eligible to compete for KPP funding. Providers may not apply individually; they must submit a joint application with other providers. KPP slots are funded through tobacco settlement dollars.⁴

Charter schools in Kansas

The state permits start-up and conversion charter schools. There is a single authorizing option for charter school applicants in Kansas; charter applicants must first be approved by the local school board and then by the state board of education.⁵

Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

Districts interested in providing SPP must develop and submit an application to the Kansas Department of Education. If approved, the district receives SPP funding through the school funding formula based on the number of eligible students served. SPP students are funded at half of the per-pupil allocation for full-time students. Districts funded in the previous year are guaranteed continued funding, pending approval by the state board of education.⁶ In FY15,



TOTAL SCORE

35/50

Kansas's climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **somewhat hospitable***

- + There are no state statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K.
- + Compared to K-12 funding levels, pre-K program funding is sufficient to attract charters.
- + The size of the pre-K program does not limit charter access to funding.
- The funding, application, or approval process creates a barrier to charter access.
- + Automatic enrollment from charter pre-K to kindergarten is not prohibited in legislation or practice.

**Kansas's score is based on the State Pre-Kindergarten Program (SPP), rather than the Kansas Preschool Program (KPP), because the former is the larger program.*



only districts that were already offering SPP could apply for continuation grants.⁷ Charter schools within participating districts are eligible to receive SPP funding directly through the school funding formula.

Charter schools interested in offering KPP must team up with other pre-K providers to submit a joint grant application for KPP funding. No new funding has been allocated to the program in several years, so there have been no opportunities for new providers to access KPP funding.

The KSDE evaluates KPP grant applications and submits funding recommendations to the state board of education for approval.⁸ Current providers maintain KPP status by applying for a continuation grant. These providers currently receive continuation funds for three years as long as they meet the requirements of the grant and demonstrate alignment with KPP standards.⁹

Barriers

Although there are two state-funded pre-K programs in Kansas, the barriers focus on SPP because it is the larger program.

Are there any statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K?

+ **No.** The state charter law, KPP legislation, and SPP legislation do not explicitly allow or prohibit charter schools to offer pre-K. The Kansas Department of Education determined that, because charter schools are part of a public school district, they are eligible to receive SPP funding through the school funding formula. Charter schools are also eligible to join a consortium of providers competing for KPP funding.¹⁰ As of March 2015, no charter schools in Kansas offer pre-K.¹¹

Is the funding level of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

+ **No.** SPP funding is sufficient, compared to K–12 funding levels, to attract charters to offer pre-K. Charter schools that offer half-day SPP services receive 53 percent of the per-pupil funding amount that charters receive to serve full-day K–12 students.

Is the size of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

+ **No.** The size of SPP is not a barrier to charters accessing state pre-K funds. The program serves 17 percent of all four-year-olds in the state.

Is the application, approval, and/or funding process a barrier to charter access?

– **Yes.** The SPP funding process creates barriers to charter access. Charter schools within participating districts are eligible to receive SPP funding directly through the school funding formula, but must be located in an SPP-participating district and approved by their authorizing district to offer pre-K. Currently, 63 percent of districts participate in SPP.¹²

Further, there has been no new funding for SPP for several years, and the current funding has remained with existing schools. As a result, even if a charter school were to open in a participating district, the school would not be able to access SPP funding until new funding is allocated to the program.

Is automatic enrollment from pre-K to kindergarten prohibited in legislation or practice?

+ **No.** Kansas legislation does not explicitly allow or prohibit automatic enrollment from pre-K into kindergarten. The legislation states that a school's charter must outline the school's admission process, including a description of the lottery method used if the school is oversubscribed.¹³ The lottery process may include priority consideration for certain student populations, if approved by the authorizer. Charter schools may include priority preferences for students enrolled in their pre-K program if their authorizer approves it.

Are there any other barriers to charters offering pre-K?

– **Yes.** Kansas has the nation's second-weakest charter school law. The state offers only one authorizing option—local school districts—and charter schools have limited operational, fiscal, and legal autonomy. As a result, there are relatively few charter schools in Kansas, which limits the degree to which charter schools are able to serve as pre-K providers in Kansas.

Recommendations

To address these barriers to charter access, the state should:

- Strengthen its charter law to open the state to additional charter schools.
- Explicitly allow charter schools to offer pre-K in the state charter school law.
- Require authorizing school boards to consider charter petitions that include pre-K.



	State Pre-Kindergarten Program (SPP)	Kansas Preschool Program (KPP)	Charter schools in Kansas
Year created	Launched in 1998 ¹⁴	Launched in 2006 ¹⁵	Charter law enacted in 1994 ¹⁶
Children in state	81,531 three- and four-year-olds in Kansas ¹⁷		598,598 school-age children in Kansas ¹⁸
Children served	7,094 children served 0 percent of three-year-olds 17 percent of four-year-olds ¹⁹	1,539 children served ²⁰ 0 percent of three-year-olds 4 percent of four-year-olds ²¹	2,466 students served <1 percent of school-age population Eleven charter schools ²²
Charters offering pre-K	No charter schools in Kansas offer pre-K. ²³		Five charter schools in Kansas offer elementary programs. ²⁴
Funding	Districts receive \$1,900 per pupil to offer SPP. ²⁵	Kansas awards KPP funds to providers as a flat grant amount. Providers may receive grants of between \$2,662 and \$8,614 per pupil to offer KPP. ²⁶	Charter schools receive about \$3,582 per pupil to serve K–12 students. ²⁷

Endnotes

- 1 Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), “State Pre-Kindergarten Program (Four Year Old At-Risk) Program Standards and Requirements, 2015–2016,” <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/State%20PreKindergarten/StatePreK-Standards.pdf>.
- 2 Education Justice, “Kansas,” <http://www.educationjustice.org/states/kansas.html>.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 In 1996, Kansas accepted the Master Settlement Agreement: a settlement between forty-six states and four major tobacco companies. Since 1999, the tobacco companies have made annual payments to these states to compensate for smoking-related health care costs and are supposed to do so in perpetuity. Kansas uses part of its Master Settlement dollars to fund KPP.
- 5 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: Kansas,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/KS/>.
- 6 KSDE, “State Pre-Kindergarten Program Standards.”
- 7 KSDE, “State Pre-Kindergarten Program (Four Year Old At-Risk) Continuation Grant Application, 2015–2016,” <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/State%20PreKindergarten/StatePreK-Application.doc>.
- 8 KSDE, “Kansas Preschool Program Grant Application, 2015–2016,” <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/Kansas%20Preschool%20Program/KPPApplication.pdf>.
- 9 KSDE, “Kansas Preschool Program Continuation Application for 2014–2015: Basic Information,” <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/Early%20Childhood/Kansas%20Preschool%20Program/KPPEmail.pdf>.
- 10 Interview with KDE representative, December 3, 2014.
- 11 KSDE, “Kansas Charter Schools, 13–14,” September 25, 2013, <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/TLA/Graduation%20and%20School%20Choice/Charter/Charter%20Schools%2013-14.pdf>.
- 12 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013: State Preschool Yearbook” (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013), <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf>.
- 13 Kansas State Legislature, House Bill 2320, K.S.A. 72-1906 c(8), February 2013, http://kslegislature.org/li/b2015_16/statute/072_000_0000_chapter/072_019_0000_article/072_019_0006_section/072_019_0006_k/.
- 14 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013.”
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Kansas.”
- 17 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 five-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” www.census.gov/acs.
- 18 Ibid., all children in households, three to seventeen years old.
- 19 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013.”
- 20 Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund, “Children’s Initiatives Fund: Briefing Binder” (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Center for Public Partnerships and Research, Achievement and Assessment Institute, November 14, 2014), http://kschildrenscabinet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Briefing_Binder_11-20-14_FINAL_compressed.pdf.
- 21 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013.”
- 22 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Kansas.”
- 23 KSDE, “Kansas Charter Schools, 13–14.”
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Interview with KDE representative, December 3, 2014.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.