

Missouri

Background

Missouri offers two pre-K initiatives: a funding formula program through HB 1689 and a start-up grant through the Missouri Preschool Program (MPP). The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) administers both programs.

HB 1689 (2014)

In 2014, Missouri passed HB 1689 as a funding stream for pre-K. Under the law, school districts and charter schools that operate pre-K programs will receive funding through the school foundation formula for three- to five-year-olds who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FARM). Once HB 1689 is fully implemented, schools will be able to include these students in their average daily attendance (ADA) counts and receive state funding through the school-funding formula for them.

According to HB 1689, the state will begin providing pre-K funding in the 2015–16 school year for unaccredited school districts (a state categorization for the most low-performing districts) and in the 2016–17 school year for provisionally accredited districts (the next-lowest-performing districts).¹ Charter schools, which are not given an accreditation status, and accredited school districts will not receive funding until the school foundation formula is fully funded.² It is unclear if and when the foundation formula will be fully funded; in the 2015–16 school year, the foundation formula is underfunded by 8 percent.³

Missouri Preschool Program (MPP)

The Missouri Preschool Program (MPP) is a competitive grant program that provides start-up funding for organizations to offer full-day programming to three- and four-year-olds. Government entities, public schools (including charter schools), and private agencies are eligible to apply for MPP grants.⁴

Charter schools in Missouri

Missouri permits start-up and conversion charter schools. Charter schools in Missouri may only operate in certain school districts: large urban districts and districts rated in the lowest three performance categories on the state's accountability system.

Local school boards, the state board of education, 501(c)(3) nonprofits, and specific institutions of higher education, among other entities, can authorize charter schools in the Kansas City and St. Louis school districts as well as in unaccredited districts. In most other districts, only local school boards may sponsor charter schools.⁵



TOTAL SCORE

26/50

Missouri's climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **not 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 limits 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 prohibited in legislation or practice.

** Missouri's score is based on the funding stream created by HB 1689 rather than the Missouri Preschool Program because, once funded, it will be the primary funding stream for charters to offer pre-K.*



Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

If the school foundation formula is fully funded, charter schools will be able to receive state funding to serve preschoolers through HB 1689. The charter schools will first need to be approved by their authorizers to include pre-K in their charter contract. After enrolling students, charter schools will be able to include all 3–5-year-olds who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals in their average daily attendance count for the school foundation funding formula.

Potential MPP providers apply to access funding through a competitive Invitation for Grant process.⁶ Successful applicants are awarded contracts for up to five years. After the third year of the grant, the percentage of state funds starts to decline significantly so that the provider is completely phased out of funding by the end of the fifth-year grant.

Barriers

This discussion of barriers focuses on both HB 1689 and MPP because once the foundation formula is fully funded, charter schools will be able to access funding through both programs.

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

+ **No.** Missouri’s charter school legislation explicitly allows charter schools to offer pre-K. The state charter law requires that charter schools “provide a comprehensive program of instruction for at least one grade or age group from kindergarten through grade twelve, which may include early childhood education if funding for such programs is established by statute, as specified in its charter.”

HB 1689 explicitly includes charter schools as potential pre-K operators, although the statute does not allow them to receive pre-K funds until the foundation formula is fully funded.

The MPP legislation lists public schools as eligible to compete for MPP funding, which the state has interpreted to mean that charter schools are eligible to compete for MPP funds.

Three charter schools in Missouri offer pre-K. One of these schools, Confluence Academy, receives funding through MPP.

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

+ **HB 1689: No.** When fully operational, charter schools will receive funding for pre-K students in the same way that charters receive funding for K–12 students.

– **MPP: Yes.** Low funding makes offering pre-K less attractive to charters. Charter schools that offer half-day pre-K through MPP receive 45 percent of the per-pupil funding that charter schools receive to serve K–12 students.

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

– **HB 1689: Yes.** Charter schools cannot receive funds through HB 1689 until the school foundation funding formula is fully funded, and it is currently underfunded by 8 percent.

– **MPP: Yes.** The size of the program is a barrier to charters accessing state pre-K funds. The program only serves 3 percent of all four-year-olds in the state.

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

– **HB 1689: Yes.** The funding process is currently a barrier to charter access. Under HB 1689, LEAs receive pre-K funding based solely on accreditation status. Because charter schools do not participate in the accreditation-status system, they cannot receive HB 1689 funding until the foundation formula is fully funded, even if they are located in an unaccredited or provisionally accredited district or serve children who live in one. If the formula is fully funded, charter schools will no longer face application, approval, or funding barriers to accessing pre-K funding.

– **MPP: Yes.** The funding process is a barrier to charter access. The Missouri Preschool Program provides only start-up funds, not continuing-operating funds, for pre-K programs.

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

– **Yes.** Students who complete a pre-K program at a Missouri charter school must enter the school’s kindergarten enrollment lottery.⁷



Recommendations

To address these barriers, the state should:

- Allow charter schools that are located within the physical boundaries of a district that is eligible for HB 1689 or who serve children who live in an eligible district to receive HB 1689 funding for serving eligible children.
- Amend the state’s charter legislation to allow children who attend pre-K at a state-funded charter pre-K program, or a program that provides pre-K to parents free of charge, to enroll in the state’s kindergarten program without going through a separate lottery.

	House Bill (HB) 1689	Missouri Preschool Program (MPP)	Charter schools in Missouri
Year created	Passed in 2014 ⁸	Launched in 1998 ⁹	Charter law enacted in 1998 ¹⁰
Children in state	159,113 three- and four-year-olds in Missouri ¹¹		1,186,501 school-age children in Missouri ¹²
Children served	Program is not yet operational ¹³	3,675 children served 1 percent of three-year-olds 3 percent of four-year-olds ¹⁴	19,439 students served 1.6 percent of school-age population Thirty-eight charter schools ¹⁵
Charters offering pre-K	At least three charter schools in Missouri offer pre-K. ¹⁶		Twenty-eight charter schools in Missouri offer elementary school programs. ¹⁷
Funding	Starting in the 2015–16 school year, some local education agencies (LEAs) will receive HB 1689 funds through a funding formula based on the number of three–five-year-olds who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. ¹⁸	Providers receive about \$6,000 per child for the first three years (start-up funding). ¹⁹	Charter schools receive \$13,390 to serve K–12 students. ²⁰



Endnotes

- 1 “Accreditation Classification,” Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, March 2015, <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/AccreditationClassification.pdf>.
- 2 “SCS HCS HB 1689 – Elementary and Secondary Education,” Missouri House of Representatives, <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills141/sumpdf/HB1689T.pdf>.
- 3 Interview with Missouri Charter Association representative; October 16, 2014.
- 4 Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Preschool Program 2015-2016 Administrative Manual-Amendment 1, <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eel-el-2016-MPP-New-Renewal-Admin-Manual.pdf>.
- 5 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: Missouri,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/MO/>.
- 6 Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Preschool Program 2015-2016 Administrative Manual-Amendment 1, <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eel-el-2016-MPP-New-Renewal-Admin-Manual.pdf>.
- 7 Interview with Kansas City Public Schools representative, November 3, 2014.
- 8 “House Bill No. 1689,” Missouri House of Representatives, 2014, <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills141/billpdf/truly/HB1689T.PDF>.
- 9 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>.
- 10 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Missouri.”
- 11 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 5-year estimates.
- 12 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 5-year estimates. All children in households, 3-17 years old.
- 13 “House Bill No. 1689,” Missouri House of Representatives, 2014, <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills141/billpdf/truly/HB1689T.PDF>.
- 14 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013.”
- 15 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Missouri.”
- 16 Private, with sliding-scale tuition: Benjamin Banneker Charter Academy of Technology; City Garden Montessori School; North Side Community School.
- 17 “Kansas City Missouri Charter Schools,” Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, <http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-charter-kccharterschools.pdf>.
- 18 “House Bill No. 1689,” Missouri House of Representatives, 2014, <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills141/billpdf/truly/HB1689T.PDF>.
- 19 Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Missouri Preschool Program 2015-2016 Administrative Manual-Amendment 1, <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/eel-el-2016-MPP-New-Renewal-Admin-Manual.pdf>.
- 20 Megan Batdorff et al., “Charter School Funding: Inequality Expands,” Missouri section (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform, School Choice Demonstration Project, April 2014), <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/charter-funding-inequality-expands-dc.pdf>.