

## Your Question:

You asked for information on states and districts that partner with private providers for pre-kindergarten.

## Our Response:

State-funded pre-kindergarten programs often engage private providers to offer pre-kindergarten services to children. Private providers can be engaged through direct funding to the providers or through subcontracts at the district level. With private providers, some states require certain quality measures for both programs and employees.

### Partnering with Private Providers

#### Funding to Private Providers

There are two general approaches that states take to partnering with private entities to provide pre-kindergarten. One option is to permit state funds to go directly to private providers; the second is to allow schools or districts to subcontract with private providers. In the [appendices](#) of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) State of Preschool Report, they break down the funding of private providers into the two aforementioned categories. According to NIEER's [2018 report](#):<sup>1</sup>

- At least 29 states allow for private providers to receive funding directly from the state for pre-kindergarten services.
- At least 34 states allow for districts or schools to subcontract with private providers for pre-kindergarten services.
- There are at least two states, Hawaii and Oklahoma, that do not permit private providers to receive state funds for pre-kindergarten services.

#### Quality

Annually, NIEER [reports](#) on 10 quality metrics for each state's pre-kindergarten program. In the report, NIEER examines all state-funded pre-kindergarten programs on quality metrics, including those provided by private entities. Quality metrics measure the following topics:

- Standards and curriculum.
- Teacher and assistant degrees, training and professional development.
- Class size and staff-child ratio.
- Health screening and referrals.
- Quality improvement system that includes observations and use of data.

### Private Pre-Kindergarten Workforce: Qualifications and Pay

The NIEER 2017-2018 State of Preschool Survey asked a series of questions about lead teachers in state-funded preschools. The [2018 supplemental](#) survey asked questions about lead teacher degree requirements, starting salary, salary schedules, benefits, salary gaps and professional development. General observations from the survey include:

- At least 24 states require public school and private setting lead preschool teachers hold a bachelor's degree.
- At least 10 states require that lead preschool teachers in both public and private settings have the same starting salary as K-3 teachers.
- At least two states, Minnesota and Tennessee, require that lead preschool teachers in both public and private settings receive retirement, health, and paid leave benefits equal to K-3 teachers.

<sup>1</sup> See pages 300 through 302 in [appendices of the 2018 NIEER State of Preschool Report](#) for additional information on programs eligible to receive funding.

- In states that require both public and private lead teachers hold bachelor's degrees, the pay gap between private and public teachers is \$10,273.

## State Examples

### Georgia

The state expanded a pre-kindergarten pilot program in 1995 to create the [Georgia Pre-K Program](#). The state uses lottery revenue to fund the program. The funds are distributed to public schools, private child-care centers, faith-based organizations, Head Start agencies, state colleges and universities and military facilities. As state funds can be distributed directly to providers, the state does not designate entities that can receive subcontracts to provide services.

[Applicants](#) to become a pre-kindergarten provider in the state must demonstrate that they will implement the state [Pre-K Provider Guidelines](#). The state program meets all but two, maximum class size and staff-child ratio, of the 10 NIEER quality benchmarks. Lead teachers at both private and public providers are required to [hold a bachelor's degree](#). The state requires that lead teachers receive a [base salary equal to that for K-3 teachers](#) in the state.

The state also provides [resources](#) for pre-kindergarten staff to use in supporting student transitions from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.

### West Virginia

[West Virginia's Universal Pre-K System](#) serves roughly 15,101 children. The state distributes funds to public schools across the state to administer pre-kindergarten. The state requires that half of the programs partner with childcare centers, private kindergartens or Head Start agencies to meet statewide demand. Private programs are subcontracted through schools that receive state funds.

In 2018, the West Virginia Universal Pre-K System met nine of the 10 NIEER quality benchmarks. Lead teachers in both public and private settings are required to have a bachelor's degree. However, starting pay for a lead teacher is only required to be equivalent to that of K-3 teachers for those teaching in a public school setting.

### Colorado

In 2018, roughly 98 percent of the state's 179 school districts offered pre-kindergarten through the [Colorado Preschool Program](#). State pre-kindergarten funding is provided to school districts on a competitive basis with priority given to districts with exemplary implementation plans and districts not currently participating in the program. School districts that receive funding can subcontract with private childcare centers, Head Start or community-based or public agencies.

The state program met [five of NIEER's quality benchmarks](#) in 2018. Based on NIEER's 2018 [supplement on preschool teachers](#), lead pre-kindergarten teachers in both private and public settings are not required to hold bachelor's degrees. Further, the state does not require pay parity for pre-kindergarten teachers equal to that of K-3 teachers.

The Colorado Department of Education provides a [guiding document](#) for student transitions from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten.