



# Wisconsin

## Wisconsin 4K

Wisconsin's 4K program is open to all 4-year-olds, but only about half of the state's school districts choose to provide the program. Local school districts have primary authority in administering the 4K program, including decisions about program standards, class size, and curriculum. The local district can decide to sub-contract with community-based providers, and is then responsible for monitoring these programs.

### Eligibility

**Income:** none

**Age:** 4 years old by September 1 of the program year

**Priority:** none

### Length of Program

**Hours/day:** locally determined; typically two and a half hours per day

**Days/year:** a minimum of 437 hours per year (typically 175 days per year)

### Eligible Providers

Public school districts can sub-contract with child care centers, Head Start programs, family child care, or other community-based programs; at least 14 of 189 participating school districts contract with community-based providers

### Number Served<sup>1</sup>

16,968 (2003-04)

### Total Annual Budget

\$75 million (2003-04 estimate): \$48 million in state aid funds and \$27 million in local match

### Monitoring

Local school boards are responsible for monitoring standards in 4K programs. Local districts also control regulations regarding class size, ratios, and curriculum. However, all teachers are required to have a Bachelor's degree (B.A.) with a pre-kindergarten license. Local districts are required to adopt early learning standards and may elect to use the Model Early Learning Standards or the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards.

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<sup>1</sup> For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

## Governance

### **How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?**

The state statute authorizes local school boards to partner with community providers. The statute also authorizes local school districts to “enter into an agreement with a licensed public or private nonsectarian day care center to lease space for pre-kindergarten or kindergarten programs offered by the school district or to place school district employees in day care centers to provide instruction in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten programs offered by the school district.” Local school districts determine how best to deliver the program with or without community-based providers, but the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) encourages schools to look to the community. School boards negotiate individually with community providers, and there is great variation in the collaborative models.

### **Are there requirements to integrate Pre-k and Child Care at the state or local level?**

There is no requirement to integrate at the state or local level, although there are informal efforts to work across the two agencies that administer the pre-k and child care programs. The Governor’s Kidsfirst Initiative and the Governor’s Task Force on Educational Excellence both support community approaches and recommend funding to promote partnerships between schools and community providers.

At the local level, experiences differ by district. For example, in the Wausau school district, the school district administrator is involved in multiple collaborative early childhood efforts, including an Interagency Council with other state and local agencies, and another community planning group for which the school is the fiscal agent. These connections have helped imbed the planning and development of the 4K initiative in the community and assure linkages to other services.

## Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

### **What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?**

DPI promotes the idea of incorporating community-based providers, but local school districts determine whether and how to recruit community partners and plan the program. DPI utilizes policy bulletins, communication systems, websites, and listserves to share information. DPI staff conduct presentations at state and regional child care and Head Start conferences. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners provide state, regional, and community networks for sharing information. Through a grant from Pre-k Now, child care resource and referral agencies have a contract from DPI to develop regional connections between 4K and regional child care associations.

Programs must meet all standards prior to approval, with some flexibility. There are statutory provisions for the Superintendent to allow teachers to receive an emergency license at the request of the employing district if no licensed candidates are available. Emergency licenses can be issued to teachers with B.A.’s in areas other than early childhood. In order to renew an

emergency license, the teacher needs to complete six credits within an approved early childhood teacher training program.

**What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?**

No state resources specifically target the pre-k program. The state targets funds for providers to earn Associate's and Bachelors degrees, but this program is open to all early childhood teachers, not just those in 4K. School districts may provide additional access to training, for example, in Wausau and Milwaukee, the school district provides professional development for all child care teachers connected to a 4K site, whether or not they are the 4K teacher.

**Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credentials as teachers in school-based settings?**

If the teacher is considered an employee of the school board, then he/she must receive the same wages and benefits as other teachers in the district. If the teacher is an employee of the child care center or Head Start, wage is determined by the employing program.

## Supports for Working Families

**Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?**

No.

**What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?**

Students are entitled to transportation to and from school if they live more than two miles from the school or community-based facility, unless they attend for a full-day. Transportation costs are funded with state aid funds as well as separate funds for transportation.

The funding formula encourages "outreach" activities—such as parent education, home visits, and family resource center visits—by allowing schools to receive an extra .1 full time employee per child if they include these activities in their 4K program.

## Funding

**What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?**

The state education formula (membership aid) determines the per child payment, and varies by district based on a school district's need. For 4K children, districts receive 50 percent of per-pupil funds (60 percent if they do parent outreach activities).

**How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?**

4K funding does not affect funding from child care subsidies or Head Start. The district receives the membership aid regardless of any collaboration with the child care subsidy system. Community-based child care programs can be reimbursed for the full number of hours that

children receive services in a program that blends 4K and child care subsidy funding. Head Start agencies use 4K funding to expand to full-day programs.

## Sources

- Interview: Jill Haglund, 04/26/2004; Julie Burmesch in Wausau, 06/23/2004; Chrissie Washington in Milwaukee, 06/25/2004.
- Website: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/echildhm.html>
- Legislation: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/Statutes.html>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: DPI Policy and Information Advisory 02.1, February 2002.

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at [http://www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).