

# Oklahoma

## Background

### Oklahoma Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program (EC4)

Oklahoma offers full- and half-day programming to all four-year-olds through the Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program (EC4). The Oklahoma Department of Education administers EC4 through the state's school finance formula. Public schools, including charter schools, receive EC4 funding and can partner with child care centers, Head Start centers, and community-based programs to offer pre-K services.

### Charter schools in Oklahoma

Oklahoma permits start-up and conversion charter schools. State law allows local school districts, technology center school districts, comprehensive or regional institutions that are part of the state system of higher education, federally recognized Indian tribes, the state board of education, and the statewide virtual charter board to serve as authorizers.<sup>1</sup> In practice, four local school districts, the University of Oklahoma, Langston University, and the Cherokee Nation serve as authorizers.<sup>2</sup>

## Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

School districts and charter schools receive EC4 funding through the school finance formula. If a charter applicant wishes to serve pre-K, it must include pre-K in its charter application. A charter school approved to offer pre-K can count pre-K students toward its enrollment for state funding purposes.

Funding amounts through the school funding formula are determined by the age of the child and the duration of the program day (ranging from 70 percent of the per-pupil funding for part-day preschoolers to 130 percent of the amount for full-day preschoolers). Charter school pre-K funding flows from the state to the charter school's authorizer, which can take up to 5 percent of the funding for administrative costs before remitting the remainder to the school.<sup>3</sup>



TOTAL SCORE


46/50

Oklahoma's climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **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, and approval processes do not create barriers to charter access.
- + Automatic enrollment from charter pre-K to kindergarten is not prohibited in legislation or practice.


## Barriers

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


 **No.** Oklahoma’s charter law explicitly allows charter schools to offer pre-K. The legislation states that charter schools may provide “a comprehensive program of instruction for a pre-Kindergarten program, a kindergarten program or any grade between grades one and twelve.”<sup>4</sup> The EC4 legislation, however, does not explicitly list charter schools as eligible providers.

At least seven charter schools in Oklahoma offer pre-K. All of these schools receive state funding through EC4.

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

 **No.** The funding level is not a barrier to charters offering pre-K. As mentioned earlier, charter schools that offer half-day EC4 services receive 70 percent of the per-pupil funding amount that charters receive to serve full-day K–12 students. Charter schools that offer full-day EC4 receive 130 percent of the K–12 per-pupil funding amount.


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

 **No.** The size of the program is not a barrier to charters accessing state pre-K funds. The program serves about 74 percent of all four-year-olds in the state.

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

 **No.** The application, approval, and funding processes are not barriers to charter access.

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

 **No.** Charter schools that offer EC4 can automatically enroll their pre-K students into their kindergarten program.

## Recommendations

Oklahoma’s existing policies do not currently present any barriers to charter schools’ ability to serve preschoolers or access state funding for pre-K.

	Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program (EC4)	Charter schools in Oklahoma
Year created	Launched in 1980 <sup>5</sup>	Charter law enacted in 1999 <sup>6</sup>
Children in state	104,874 three- and four-year-olds in Oklahoma <sup>7</sup>	767,190 school-age children in Oklahoma <sup>8</sup>
Children served	40,823 children served 0 percent of three-year-olds 74 percent of four-year-olds <sup>9,10</sup>	16,137 students served 2.1 percent of school-age population Twenty-nine charter schools <sup>11</sup>
Charters offering pre-K	Seven charter schools in Oklahoma offer pre-K. <sup>12,13</sup>	Twelve charter schools in Oklahoma offer elementary programs. <sup>14</sup>
Funding	Districts receive \$2,332 per pupil to offer EC4.	Charter schools receive \$3,082 to serve K–12 students.



## Endnotes

- 1 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: Oklahoma,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/OK/>.
- 2 National Association of Charter School Authorizers, “Oklahoma Charter Authorizers,” <http://www.qualitycharters.org/authorizer-comparison/state-by-state-overviews-oklahoma.html>.
- 3 Interview with ODE representative, January 9, 2015.
- 4 Oklahoma.gov, “Oklahoma Charter Schools Act,” <http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/CharterSchAct.pdf>.
- 5 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>.
- 6 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Oklahoma.”
- 7 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 five-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs).
- 8 Ibid., all children in households, three to seventeen years old .
- 9 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013.”
- 10 Interview with ODE representative, January 9, 2015.
- 11 “NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Oklahoma.”
- 12 Oklahoma State Department of Education, “Current Charter Schools of Oklahoma,” <http://www.ok.gov/sde/current-charter>.
- 13 Examples: John Rex Charter Elementary School (<http://johnrexschool.org>), Santa Fe South (<http://www.santafesouth.org>), Tulsa Lighthouse Charter School: North Campus (<http://www.lighthouse-academies.org/schools/tlcs/>), and Tsunadeloquasdi Cherokee Immersion Charter School (<http://www.cherokee.org/Services/Education/ImmersionSchool.aspx>).
- 14 Oklahoma State Department of Education, “Current Charter Schools of Oklahoma,” <http://www.ok.gov/sde/current-charter>.