

Ohio

Background

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The Ohio Early Childhood Education (ECE) program is a half-day program for three- and four-year-olds. The program is free for children from families below the federal poverty level; children from families between 100 and 200 percent must pay tuition on a sliding scale. Programs can accept children from higher-income families but cannot use ECE grant funding for those students. Current funding levels allow the program to serve only a fraction of eligible children.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) administers the Early Childhood Education program. School districts receive ECE funding and can subcontract with Head Start providers, faith-based providers, and private providers. Charter schools, also known as community schools in Ohio, can only offer pre-K through an affiliated program.¹

Charter schools in Ohio

Ohio law refers to charters as “community schools.” The state allows for start-up and conversion community schools, authorized by a number of different authorizer types. In practice, sixty local education agencies, three institutions of higher education, six nonprofits, and the Ohio Department of Education authorize community schools in Ohio.²

Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

ECE funding flows from the Ohio Department of Education to twelve pre-defined geographic regions. ODE allocates slots to the ten highest-need school districts in each region, based on the percentage of children that scored in the lowest band of the state’s kindergarten readiness assessment; the percentage of economically disadvantaged kindergarten students; and the percentage of third-grade students who score below proficient on the reading portion of the Ohio Achievement Assessment. ODE allocates funding to early childhood providers within identified school districts. Providers within the district boundaries that have earned a four- or five-star rating on the state’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), Step Up to Quality, will be offered slots first. If those programs do not have capacity, then three-star programs, ODE-licensed preschools that do not already receive ECE funding, and nonpublic preschool programs are offered the slots.³



TOTAL SCORE

5/50


Ohio's climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **not hospitable**

- There are state statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K.
- Compared to K–12 funding levels, low pre-K program funding makes offering pre-K less attractive to charters.
- The size of the pre-K program limits 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 prohibited in legislation or practice.




Barriers


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

 **Yes.** According to statute, community schools can only admit students between the ages of five and twenty-two.⁴ The state interprets the legislation to mean that charter schools cannot apply for ECE funding through the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). Charter schools may serve preschoolers using private funds or parent tuition, or receive child care subsidies, but must do so through an affiliated pre-K program. While several charter schools offer pre-K through affiliated programs, Ohio does not track data on charters' affiliated pre-K programs.


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

 **Yes.** Low pre-K program funding, compared to K-12 funding levels, makes pre-K less attractive to charters. Charter schools that offer half-day ECE services through an affiliated pre-K program receive 47 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?

 **Yes.** The size of the program is a barrier to charters accessing state pre-K funds. The program serves less than 4 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 process is not a barrier to charter access. Charter-affiliated pre-K programs apply to ODE for pre-K funding the same way as any other provider, but as noted above, very low program funding levels limit the number of funded programs.

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

 **Yes.** Charter schools that offer an affiliated pre-K program cannot directly enroll their pre-K students into their kindergarten program. In 2014, the state passed legislation that allows Montessori charter schools to automatically enroll pre-K students into their kindergarten program.

Recommendations

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

- Amend the definition of charter schools to include preschool-age children. If the state decides that charter schools should not receive funding for pre-K through the school funding formula, the legislation can reflect that without creating a barrier to charter schools offering pre-K through other funding streams.
- Increase ECE funding to cover the cost of delivering a high-quality program.
- Increase the number of state-funded ECE slots.
- Require ODE to track which charter schools in the state offer pre-K through affiliated programs.



	Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Charter schools in Ohio
Year created	Launched in 1990 ⁵	Charter law enacted in 1997 ⁶
Children in state	295,394 three- and four-year-olds in Ohio ⁷	2,294,754 school-age children in Ohio ⁸
Children served	11,090 children served ⁹ 3.8 percent of three- and four-year-olds	119,533 students served 5.2 percent of school-age population 400 charter schools ¹⁰
Charters offering pre-K	The state does not track data on charter schools with affiliated pre-K programs.	228 charter schools in Ohio offer elementary programs. ¹¹
Funding	Districts receive \$4,000 per pupil to offer ECE. ¹²	Charter schools receive \$8,580 per pupil to serve K–12 students. ¹³

Endnotes

1 An affiliated pre-K program is one that a charter school operates through a separate, but affiliated, entity or organization.

2 National Association of Charter School Authorizers, “Ohio Charter Authorizers,” <http://www.qualitycharters.org/authorizer-comparison/state-by-state-overviews-ohio.html>.

3 Early Childhood Ohio, “Attachment C: Early Childhood Education Expansion Funding Distribution FY15,” <http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/files/ECE%20Funding%20Distribution%20FY15.pdf>.

4 LAWriter, “Ohio Laws and Rules: 3314.06 Admission procedures,” <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3314.06>.

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 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: Ohio,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/OH>.

7 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 five-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” www.census.gov/acs.

8 Ibid., all children in households, three to seventeen years old.

9 Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, “Early Childhood Education Expansion Program Requirements: State Fiscal Year 2015,” <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Childhood-Education/New-Early-Childhood-Education-Funding-2013%E2%80%939314/Attachment-A-ECE-program-requirements-and-eligibilityFY15.pdf.aspx>.

10 “NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Ohio.”

11 Center for Education Reform, “Find a Charter School,” https://www.edreform.com/in-the-states/know-your-choices/find-a-charter-school/?filter%5Bname%5D=&filter%5Bcity%5D=&filter%5Bstate%5D=OH&filter%5Bgrade%5D=&filter%5Bgrades_categories%5D=&filter%5Bspecialty%5D=

12 Ohio Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, “Early Childhood Education FY2013 Annual Report,” http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Childhood-Education/Early-Learning-and-School-Readiness-Documents/2013-Early-Childhood-Education-Annual-Report_12-31.pdf.aspx.

13 Larry Maloney et al., “Charter School Funding: Inequality Expands,” Ohio 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-oh.pdf>.