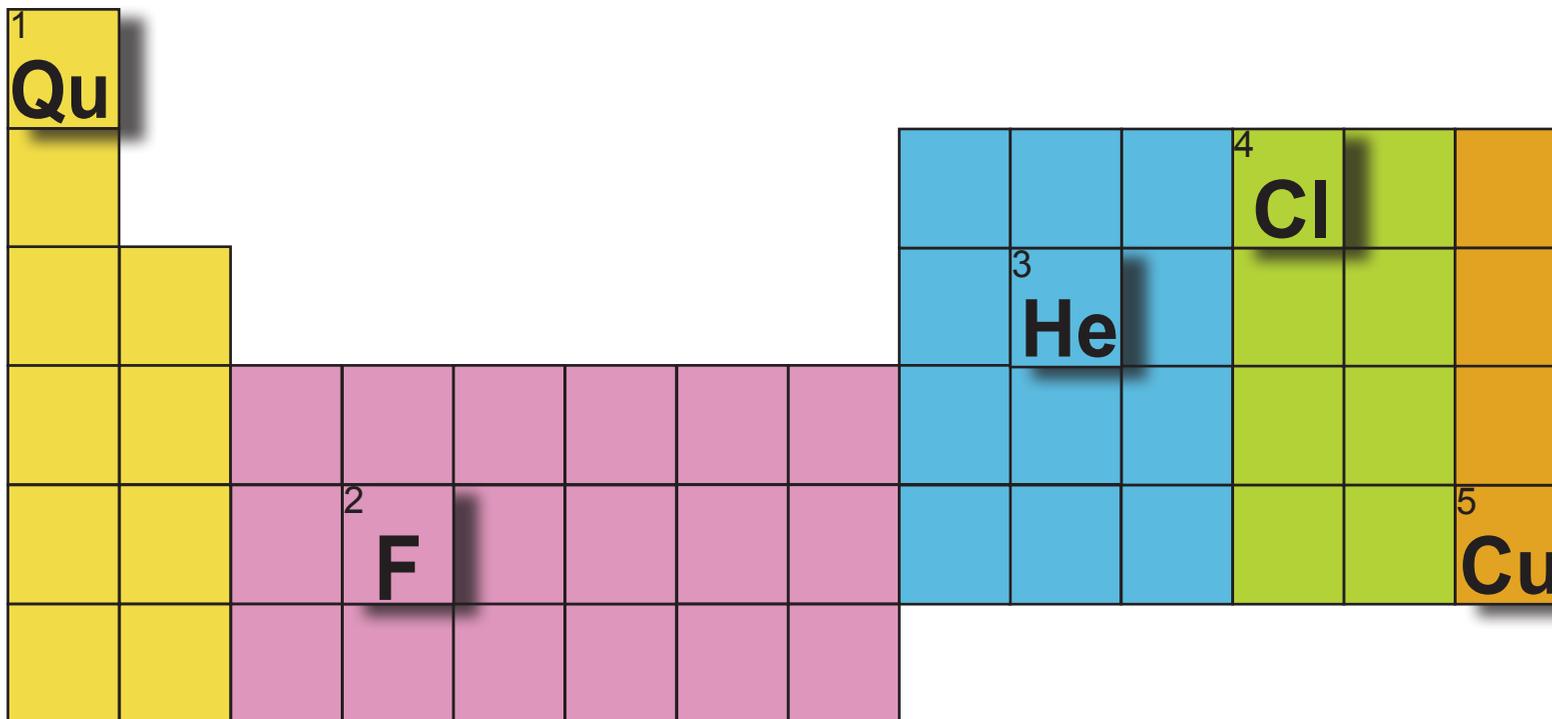


The “Elements” of Quality Pre-K



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Qu
Highly Qualified
Teachers

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F
Family Support

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He
Health

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Cl
Class Size and
Ratios

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Cu
Curriculum

by Kathryn Hazelett, Education Policy Director
April 2016

WHAT MAKES PRE-K “QUALITY”

All the research in the world tells us that quality pre-K matters. It matters most to the children who start off with their backpacks full of knowledge — they are familiar with school routines, they understand the importance of using words rather than fists when there is conflict over crayon colors, and they are beginning to recognize numbers and sound out words. They are Kindergarten-ready.¹

Quality pre-K also matters to our employers, to our state, and to our teachers. Kindergarten teachers² will tell you time and again that they know which kids have had pre-K and which haven't. They will tell you how much more smoothly class goes when kids in their Kindergarten class attended quality pre-K. Our state benefits tremendously from quality pre-K, with a very conservative estimate telling us that for every \$1 Arkansas invests, we reap \$7 in return.³ And, with the problem-solving foundation laid in pre-K, our future workforce is set to think critically and be the next generation of entrepreneurs. Our workforce will be set to beat the competition.

Why now and why “quality”? Because state support has essentially been static — with only a small, one-time increase in funding in the last eight years — now is the time to really look at what our great program needs today.

And, because “quality matters greatly,”⁴ The benefits of pre-K are dependent on a quality program.

So, let's break down the elements of quality pre-K.

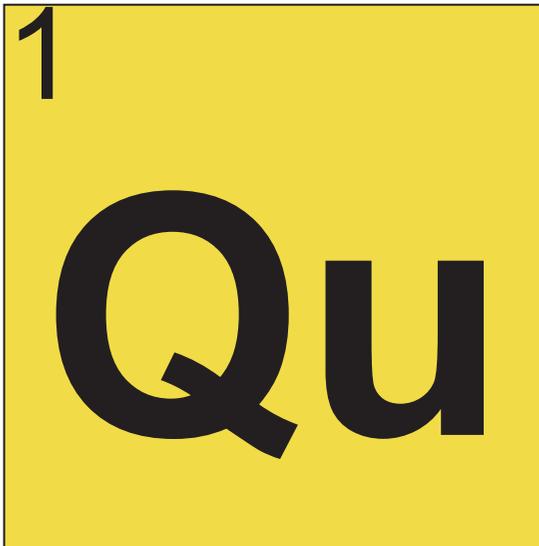
The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has done ground-breaking work in identifying the research-based state-level policies⁵ essential for quality.

The quality essentials can be divided into five groups:

1. *Highly Qualified Teachers (Qu)*
2. *Family Support (F)*
3. *Health (He)*
4. *Class Size and Student-Teacher Ratios (Cl)*
5. *Behind the Scenes: Curriculum, Monitoring, and Administration (Cu)*

Altogether the contents of these groups comprise the elements of quality pre-K. How a program is funded and how much funding a program receives is also essential to its quality. For each group, we will break down each element, how it is currently funded, and whether or not an increase is necessary for our Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) program to continue to thrive.

Our starting point for funding is the current cost model for the Arkansas ABC program. All suggested increases are based on feedback from pre-K providers and the level of funding for pre-K expansion sites in Arkansas through the Preschool Development Grants program⁶ of the U.S. Department of Education.



QUALITY TEACHERS

Teacher quality includes four separate elements:

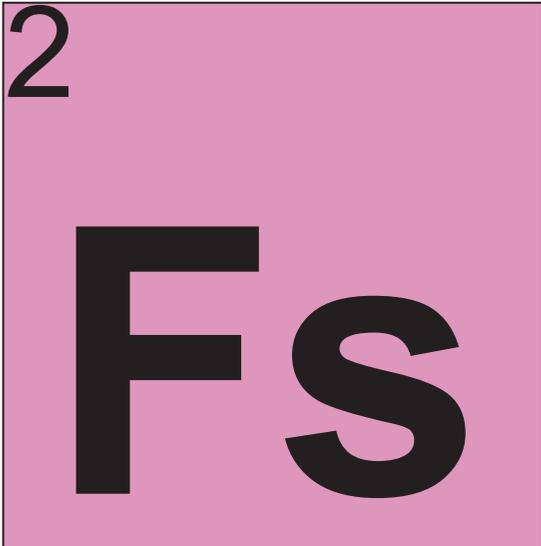
1. *Lead teacher must have at least a BA degree*
2. *Lead teacher must have specialized training in a pre-K area*
3. *Staff must have at least 15 hours of professional development each year*
4. *Assistant teachers must have at least a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA), which is a national credential awarded by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition.*

We all intuitively know the importance of quality teachers, and the research bears this out. In Arkansas, we have a robust lead teacher salary scale (we strongly recommend following an upward trajectory for our qualified teachers rather than sticking with a lower number), but a salary scale for assistant teachers that is lagging. Increasing the amount for the latter will allow for better retention of staff, which will lead to better outcomes for kiddos. The suggested increase is \$4,800 in salary and benefits for each classroom assistant.

Professional development for our teaching staff is also important. Our teachers not only need to know how and when to introduce learning concepts, but are also navigating the big emotions that all youngsters have. The research base for social, emotional, and brain development is constantly evolving. Keeping up means investing in our teachers. The suggested increase for the professional development line item is \$4,700.

Note: NIEER uses a rating scale based on the policies described above to determine the quality of states' pre-K programs. Arkansas's program currently earns a 9/10.





FAMILY SUPPORT

According to NIEER, “Families are the primary source of support for child development, and the most effective programs have partnered with parents.”⁷

How does our ABC program support our families? We fund transportation, but not enough of it. We’re hearing that many more children could attend quality pre-K if there was additional transportation available. The suggested increase in the transportation line item is \$800 per classroom.

The funding set aside to encourage and increase parent involvement also needs to be raised. Parents are busier than ever

and want to spend as much time as possible with their kiddos. Providing them with meaningful ways to engage outside of the classroom and with opportunities to participate in classroom activities will result in more engaged students. The suggested increase for parent involvement is \$2,000 per classroom and would help provide access to learning programs like Ready Rosie to parents and students. Ready Rosie is a program that delivers engaging, education-based videos via text or email two to five times a week. These videos can be accessed by computer or smartphone and are available in both English and Spanish.

The only addition to the funding model is the very important addition of a Family Service Manager (whose function is very much like a social worker in a K-12 setting). This role fills a gap that most of our ABC families face: a lack of access to or coordination of services available to them. If a child is facing a struggle, the Family Service Manager will not only be there to assist with that developmental or learning struggle, but will help the family navigate it as well. This navigation includes paperwork, referrals, appointments, and family counseling.



3 He

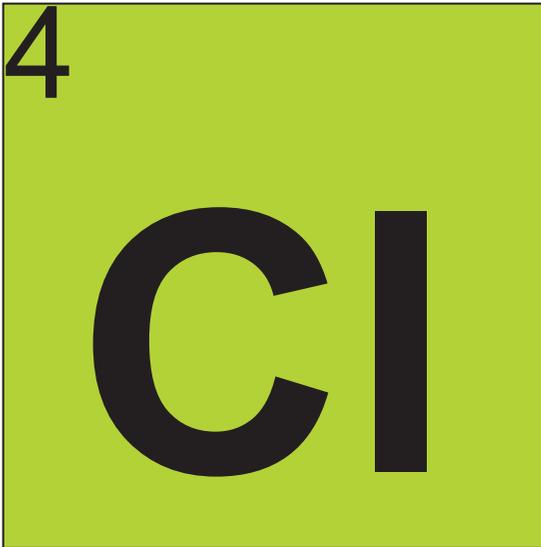
HEALTH

Healthy kids learn!⁸ And quality pre-K provides an important link between health and education. Pre-K programs are not only a space to identify any vision, hearing, or health problems that could slow learning, but also a place to provide a nutritious meal and some early education around health.

These items are captured in the Health family and reflect these policies and funding sources:

1. *Meals: At least one meal is required each day (funded through the curriculum and equipment line item)*
2. *Screening/Referral and Support Services: Screenings and referrals for vision, hearing, and health must be required; at least one additional service must be provided to families (funded through the screenings line item and the new Family Service Manager line)*





CLASS SIZE AND STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS

Class sizes and ratios are the next two elements of quality. Keeping the class size small allows for better classroom management, and keeping the ratio low means that each child receives individualized attention. Both areas correlate to student outcomes.

Breaking down the numbers:

1. *Class Size: Total class size should not exceed 20 children.*
2. *Student-Teacher Ratio: No more than 10 kids per staff member.*

The overall cost model embeds the class-size limitation and ratio in its calculations. Class size is set at 20. (It is important to note that not all classrooms will have 20 students at all times, but that for cost calculation purposes, it is the number used.)



5 C u

BEHIND THE SCENES: CURRICULUM, MONITORING, AND ADMINISTRATION

The last family of quality elements is made up of all of the behind-the-scenes features including:

1. *The establishment of strong early learning standards (and a curriculum to meet those standards), and*
2. *The monitoring of sites to ensure that all of these outlined quality elements are present.*

Arkansas recently received a \$1 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that included funding to redesign our birth-to-5 early learning standards. These new standards⁹ will include a greater focus on social and emotional skills needed for Kindergarten and higher grades and will be implemented in the Fall of 2017.

Site monitoring continues to be an important part of the behind-the-scenes work that the Department of Human Services Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education does on a daily basis.

With standards development already complete and the increase for professional development (to help teachers with implementation) discussed in the previous quality teaching section, our “behind-the-scenes” family of elements is in good shape.



HOME VISITING PROGRAM

There is one last important element of Arkansas’s quality pre-K program that deserves a section all its own, and that is the home visiting program. Our pre-K program is strong in many ways, but one of its strengths is its diversity of delivery methods. There are home-based slots for those who need some help with teaching their kids and who have time at home with them; there are center-based slots that are run by private providers; and there are center-based slots that are housed in community schools. The inclusion of home visiting is in some ways unique, and our program is better for it.

Home visiting is the broad category name for a network of voluntary, primarily home-based programs available to families with young children. Kids don’t come with instructions, so home visits cover everything from child development to school readiness. The home visitors are qualified in everything from child health to early literacy and help new parents navigate the parenting highway. Home visiting is particularly valuable to low-income and rural families who often have little access to services and resources.

Just as our center-based slots (the funding for which has been discussed in other parts of this report) need an increase to maintain quality, so too do our home-based slots.

Per-child costs for the state-funded home visiting program have increased by an average of 12 percent since the last increase and would benefit from additional funding of \$210 per child (from \$1,750 currently). They have seen spending increases in the following areas since the last time we had an increase in dedicated funds (chart at right):

Operational Cost Category	Percent of Increase
Affiliation Fees	25%
Curriculum Costs	13%
Transportation Costs	.08%
Food & General Supplies	8.5%

With approximately 5,000 children in the home visiting program, the total investment required for quality is \$1,050,000.

TOTAL INCREASED INVESTMENT FOR A THRIVING PROGRAM

What is the total increased investment needed for our pre-K program to thrive?

When you total the increases described above, we find that the increase needed is \$2,180 per child in center-based slots, based on an estimate of 19,000 kids enrolled; and an increase of \$210 per child in home-based slots, based on an estimate of 5,000 kids enrolled. The total increase needed is \$42,476,500 of state revenue.

Just remember what this investment means for our kiddos, our teachers, our workforce, and our state. Our children are Kindergarten ready. Our teachers can keep their classes moving when kids in their Kindergarten class attended quality pre-K. Our state will receive \$7 in return for every \$1 we invest. And, our workforce will be set to beat the competition.



Cost Model for Arkansas's ABC Program				Suggested Increase*	New Total
Well-Qualified, Compensated Staff	Classroom Teacher	Salary Range	\$30,000		\$30,000
			\$44,160		\$44,160
		Fringe Range	\$7,500		\$7,500
			\$11,040		\$11,040
	Paraprofessional	Salary	\$18,000	\$3,000	\$21,000
		Fringe	\$4,500	\$1,800	\$6,300
Family Service Manager** (1 for every 60 children/1 for every three classrooms)			\$45,953	\$15,317.67	
Administrative Costs		\$220 per child	\$4,400		\$4,400
Curriculum and Equipment		\$275 per child	\$5,500		\$5,500
Parent Involvement		\$100 per child	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Transportation		\$110 per child	\$2,200	\$800	\$3,000
Professional Development		\$1,600 per staff member	\$3,300	\$4,700	\$8,000
Screenings		\$50 per child	\$1,000		\$1,000
Technology		\$55 per child	\$1,100		\$1,100
Total State ABC Funding for 20 Children			\$97,200		\$162,317.67
40% Funding Match From Provider at Local Level			\$38,800		\$38,800
TOTAL PROGRAM COST INCLUDING INCREASE:			\$136,000		\$201,117.67
TOTAL INCREASE:					\$42,476,500

Notes: *The new dollars will not require a state match. **The Family Service Manager is spread over three classrooms.

NOTES

- 1: https://arc.arkansas.gov/arc_web/resources/publications/ABC_Shrinks_Gap.pdf
- 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dsvtvc0YTE&index=5&list=PL1Z8Q-Q1oYFqtysFRJhO48kBZJ206hj7Z>
- 3: <http://www.nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Getting%20the%20Facts%20Right%20on%20Pre-K%20Fast%20Facts%20Summary.pdf>
- 4: <http://www.nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Getting%20the%20Facts%20Right%20on%20Pre-K.pdf>
- 5: http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Yearbook2014_full3.pdf
- 6: <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/18-states-award-ed-new-preschool-development-grants-increase-access-high-quality-preschool-programs>
- 7: http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Yearbook2014_full3.pdf
- 8: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK225557/>
- 9: <http://www.aradvocates.org/publications/the-state-of-early-childhood-education/>



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