



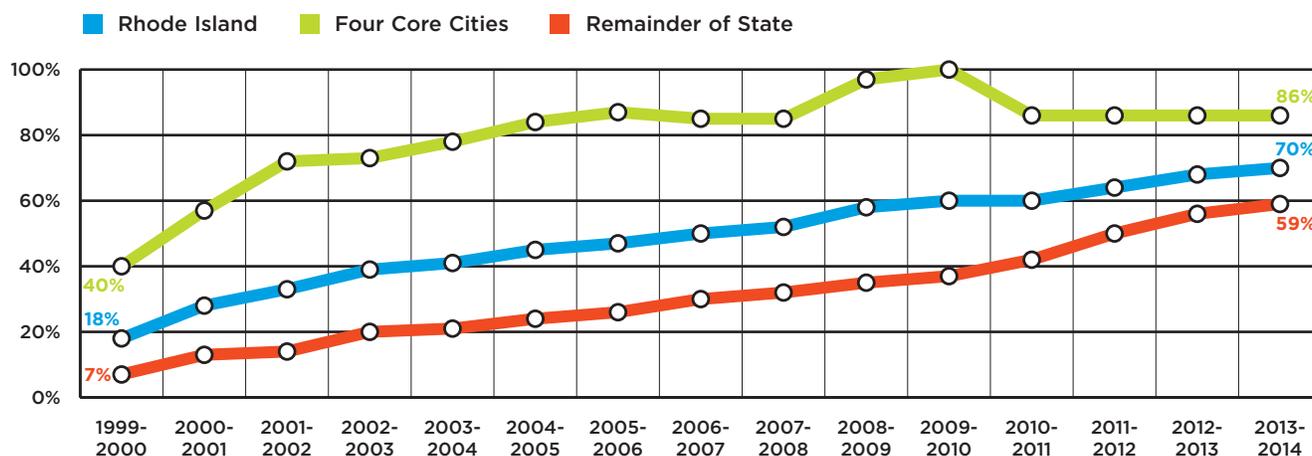
EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8

Focus on Full-Day Kindergarten

Nationally, as well as in Rhode Island, there is growing awareness that high quality early education from preschool through third grade sets the foundation for learning by helping children acquire critical cognitive, language, social, and emotional skills. **Full-day kindergarten is an essential part of a child's education.**¹ Research shows that children who participate in full-day kindergarten show stronger gains in academic skills than children in half-day programs. Full-day kindergarten benefits children and their families by providing continuity for children accustomed to full-day experiences outside the home prior to kindergarten and prepares young children for schooling in first grade and beyond.^{2,3} Despite these benefits, the percentage of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten in Rhode Island (70%) is lower than the U.S. rate of 76%.⁴

CHILDREN IN FULL-DAY PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND,
1999-2000 THROUGH 2013-2014 SCHOOL YEARS



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, kindergarten enrollment October 1, 1999 - October 1, 2013.

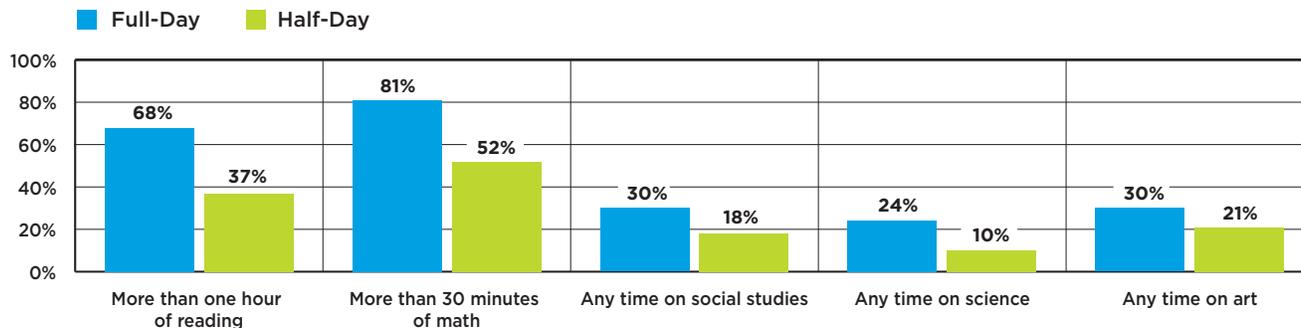
Access to Full-Day Kindergarten in Rhode Island

- During the 2013-2014 school year, 22 school districts offered universal access to full-day kindergarten programs, 5 districts operated one or more full-day kindergarten classrooms, and 8 districts did not offer any full-day kindergarten.⁵
- Currently, 86% of public school kindergarten students in the four core cities (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket) and 59% of the students in the remainder of the state are enrolled in full-day programs. All of the charter schools that offer kindergarten provide full-day programs. The percentage of children in the four core city school districts enrolled in full-day kindergarten is down from 100% participation in the 2009-2010 school year, the last year Woonsocket offered full-day kindergarten. The Woonsocket school district is working to re-establish full-day kindergarten.⁶

Academic Progress in Full-Day Kindergarten

Children in full-day kindergarten spend more time on reading, math, social studies, and science instruction and make significant gains in early reading, math, and social skills compared with children in half-day kindergarten. The gains in both reading and math close the achievement gap by nearly one-third in reading and by one-fourth in math.⁷

DAILY INSTRUCTION TIME BY SUBJECT FOR FULL-DAY VERSUS HALF-DAY KINDERGARTEN, U.S., 1999



Source: Walston, J. & West, J. (2004). *Full-day and half-day kindergarten in the United States: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Full-Day Kindergarten Accessibility Act

In 2012, the General Assembly passed the *Full-Day Kindergarten Accessibility Act* which established a fund to help school districts with start-up costs associated with moving from part-day to full-day kindergarten. School districts that receive funding are allowed to phase-in the implementation of a full-day kindergarten program, provided that the district submits a schedule and implementation plan. With funding from the FY14 state budget, four districts received full-day kindergarten start-up grants (Barrington, Exeter-West Greenwich, Glocester, and Smithfield) for the 2014-2015 school year, and six districts received planning grants (Coventry, East Greenwich, Johnston, North Kingstown, Scituate, and Woonsocket).

Recommendations

- All school districts in Rhode Island should offer full-day kindergarten so that all Rhode Island children have the academic benefit of full-day kindergarten programs.
- Continue to offer incentives and supports through the *Full-Day Kindergarten Accessibility Fund* to the remaining districts that do not offer universal full-day kindergarten so that 100% of districts statewide offer universal full-day kindergarten by the 2016-2017 school year.
- Ensure that school districts that make the transition to full-day kindergarten receive full-day per-pupil state aid, in accordance with the core principle that the funding follows the child.

References

- ¹³ Kauerz, K. (2010). *PreK-3rd: Putting full-day kindergarten in the middle*. Washington, DC: Foundation for Child Development.
- ² Kauerz, K. (2010). *Full-day kindergarten: A study of state policies in the United States*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.
- ^{4,5,6} Children Enrolled in Full-Day Kindergarten. *2000-2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbooks*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.
- ⁷ Walston, J. & West, J. (2004). *Full-day and half-day kindergarten in the United States: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.



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