

# Children Enrolled in State Pre-K

## DEFINITION

*Children enrolled in State Pre-K* is the number and percentage of children enrolled in the State Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) program managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The State Pre-K program is operated by child care programs, Head Start programs, and public schools.

## SIGNIFICANCE

State-funded Pre-K programs for children ages three and four are available in 40 states, with 29% of four-year-olds and 4% of three-year-olds enrolled nationwide. Eight states and the District of Columbia have more than half of their four-year-olds enrolled in State Pre-K.<sup>1</sup> States have increased investments in Pre-K, recognizing that children who attend high-quality preschool make substantive developmental, academic, language, and social gains that can persist well into later school years, and are less likely to be retained a grade or enrolled in special education.<sup>2,3,4</sup> In states without large public Pre-K programs, children of high-income and highly educated families are much more likely to be enrolled in preschool than children from low- and moderate-income families.<sup>5</sup>

High-quality preschool programs show strong economic returns, with benefits to children and the public far exceeding the original investment. Small class sizes, low child-teacher ratios, and

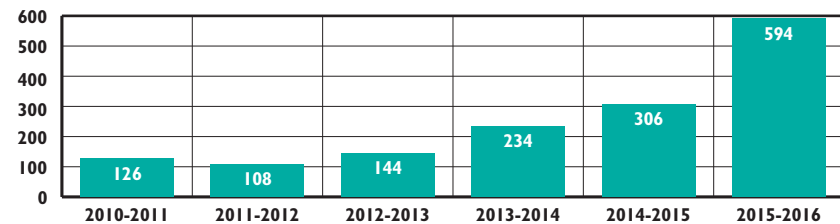
teachers who are well-educated, well-paid, emotionally supportive, and use curricula effectively produce the biggest gains for children.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

In 2008, the General Assembly passed *The Rhode Island Prekindergarten Education Act*, acknowledging the need to adequately prepare all children to succeed in school by providing access to publicly-funded, high quality Pre-K and requiring the Rhode Island Department of Education to plan for the development of a State Pre-K program that meets high-quality standards, builds on the existing early childhood education infrastructure, and serves children ages three and four.<sup>9</sup>

Rhode Island began offering the State Pre-K program for four-year-olds in the 2009-2010 school year. The state's program is one of only five in the U.S. to meet all recommended quality benchmarks.<sup>10</sup> Rhode Island's State Pre-K program has been found to improve children's language and math skills and close the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers by three-quarters.<sup>11</sup>

State Pre-K is an important part of a strong state early learning system that starts at birth and continues through third grade, including nurturing, language-rich environments in child care, Head Start, full-day kindergarten, and the early elementary grades.<sup>12</sup>

Rhode Island State Pre-K Funded Slots, 2010-2011 through 2015-2016



Sources: National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013*. Rhode Island Department of Education, State Pre-K programs 2013-2014 through 2015-2016.

- ◆ As of the 2015-2016 school year, there are 33 State Pre-K classrooms in Rhode Island with a total of 594 children enrolled. Twenty-five percent of children enrolled in State Pre-K speak a language other than English at home and 12% have a developmental delay or disability.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Of the 33 State Pre-K classrooms, 52% (17) are operated by a Head Start agency, 39% (13) by a child care center/preschool, and 9% (3) by a public school district.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ State Pre-K funds are targeted to communities with a high proportion of low-income families, using the percentage of children participating in the local school district's free and reduced-price lunch program as a guideline. Children are selected to participate in State Pre-K through a lottery, with children from low-income families prioritized for enrollment based on the proportion of low-income children in the local school district.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ In the 2015-2016 school year, 417 (70%) of the children enrolled in State Pre-K are low-income.<sup>16</sup> This is approximately 8% of the population of low-income four-year olds under 200% FPL statewide.<sup>17</sup> Including the 1,391 low-income four-year-olds enrolled in Head Start in Rhode Island, approximately 33% of the state's low-income four-year-olds are enrolled in a public preschool program (State Pre-K or Head Start).<sup>18</sup>

## State Pre-K Expansion

- ◆ With 5% of all four-year-olds enrolled, Rhode Island ranks near the bottom of the 40 states for access to State Pre-K.<sup>19,20</sup> Expansion of the State Pre-K program is included in Rhode Island's education funding formula.<sup>21</sup> In 2014, Rhode Island was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant that will accelerate expansion.<sup>22</sup>

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Table 37.

Children Enrolled in State Pre-K, Rhode Island, 2015-2016

CITY/TOWN	# OF CHILDREN AGE 4	% CHILDREN <AGE 6 IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES	ESTIMATED # OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 4	# LOW-INCOME CHILDREN ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K	% LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 4 ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K	# CHILDREN ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K	% CHILDREN AGE 4 ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K
Barrington	199	5.2%*	10	0	0%	0	0%
Bristol	206	22.5%**	46	0	0%	0	0%
Burrillville	173	19.7%**	34	0	0%	0	0%
Central Falls	345	80.8%**	279	48	17%	54	16%
Charlestown	81	53.5%***	43	0	0%	0	0%
Coventry	366	33.9%**	124	0	0%	0	0%
Cranston	862	34.3%*	296	16	5%	36	4%
Cumberland	426	22.9%*	98	0	0%	0	0%
East Greenwich	158	22.6%**	36	0	0%	0	0%
East Providence	469	48.4%*	227	9	4%	18	4%
Exeter	55	NA	NA	0	0%	0	0%
Foster	53	27.2%***	14	0	0%	0	0%
Glocester	106	9.6%**	10	0	0%	0	0%
Hopkinton	87	31.6%***	27	0	0%	0	0%
Jamestown	50	7.9%***	4	0	0%	0	0%
Johnston	278	48.6%**	135	0	0%	0	0%
Lincoln	211	32.3%**	68	0	0%	0	0%
Little Compton	28	24.3%***	7	0	0%	0	0%
Middletown	226	30.3%*	68	0	0%	0	0%
Narragansett	117	16.1%**	19	0	0%	0	0%
New Shoreham	7	30%***	2	0	0%	0	0%
Newport	232	33.1%**	77	33	43%	54	23%
North Kingstown	318	28.2%**	90	0	0%	0	0%
North Providence	282	32.1%**	91	0	0%	0	0%
North Smithfield	108	20.7%***	22	0	0%	0	0%
Pawtucket	1,006	58.5%*	589	28	5%	36	4%
Portsmouth	196	24.4%***	48	0	0%	0	0%
Providence	2,382	70.0%*	1,667	165	10%	198	8%
Richmond	102	21.4%***	22	0	0%	0	0%
Scituate	94	15.6%***	15	0	0%	0	0%
Smithfield	169	10.4%*	18	0	0%	0	0%
South Kingstown	273	27.6%**	75	0	0%	0	0%
Tiverton	143	29.5%***	42	0	0%	0	0%
Warren	127	47.1%***	60	0	0%	0	0%
Warwick	850	24.4%*	207	21	10%	54	6%
West Greenwich	53	6.9%**	4	0	0%	0	0%
West Warwick	354	53.7%**	190	27	14%	54	15%
Westerly	244	34.1%***	83	0	0%	0	0%
Woonsocket	584	73.3%*	428	70	16%	90	15%
Four Core Cities	4,317	68.9%	2,974	311	10%	378	9%
Remainder of State	7,703	31.0%	2,388	106	4%	216	3%
Rhode Island	12,020	45.2%	5,433	417	8%	594	5%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

The number children enrolled in State Pre-K is from the Rhode Island Department of Education, October 2015.

The number of children age four in each community is from Census 2010, Summary File 1.

Estimated number of low-income children age four is the number of children age four according to Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty line (FPL) according to the Population Reference Bureau's analysis of 2010-2014 American Community Survey data. Estimated eligible children for the four core cities, remainder of state, and Rhode Island is calculated using PRB estimates for those groupings and is not a sum of estimates by community.

The American Community Survey is a sample survey, and therefore the number and percentage of children living in poverty are estimates. The reliability of these estimates varies by community.

\* The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than 5 but less than 10 percentage points.

\*\* The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than 10 but less than 15 percentage points.

\*\*\* The Margin of Error around the percentage is greater than or equal to 15 percentage points.

NA: American Community Survey estimate of % of children under age six in poverty is not available for this community.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

<sup>1,10,20,22</sup> Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Squires, J. H., Brown, K. C., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

<sup>2,6</sup> Epstein, D. J. & Barnett, W. S. (2012). Early education in the United States: Programs and access. In R. C. Pianta, W. S. Barnett, L. M. Justice & S. M. Sheridan (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood education*. (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

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