

Children Enrolled in Kindergarten

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in kindergarten compiles selected data about children enrolled in public kindergarten in Rhode Island.

SIGNIFICANCE

As of 2016-2017, 100% of the kindergartners in Rhode Island were in full-day classrooms.¹ Children benefit academically from participating in full-day kindergarten.²

The transition to kindergarten is an important point in a child's educational experience, marking either the start of their formal education or the transition between preschool, which is not universally available or guaranteed as part of most states' public education systems, to the early elementary grades. During kindergarten and the early elementary grades, families establish patterns of engagement with their child's school and children learn important social-emotional, literacy, and math skills that establish a foundation for future learning.^{3,4}

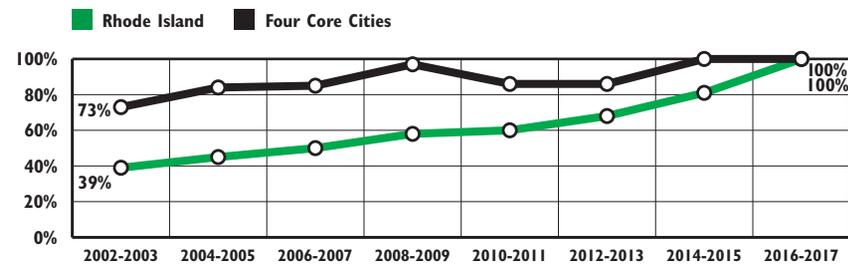
Approximately 66% of four-year-olds and 43% of three-year-olds in the U.S. participate in private or public preschool before kindergarten. Despite increased public investments in preschool, children from higher-income families continue to be more likely to be enrolled in preschool than children from lower-

income families. There is strong evidence that high-quality preschool improves children's language, literacy, and math skills. Preschool participation is also associated with longer-term positive outcomes such as reduced grade retention and need for special education, improved high school graduation rates, and reduced criminal activity.⁵

High-quality and developmentally-appropriate instruction in kindergarten and the early elementary grades helps sustain the positive impacts of preschool and addresses knowledge and skill deficits among children who have not had any early learning opportunities.⁶

Kindergarten and early elementary grade teachers need specialized training in child development, reading instruction, the foundations of math, social-emotional skill building, how to incorporate play and hands-on learning into classroom instruction, and working with diverse groups of children and families. Strategies that support high-quality early grade instruction include requiring PK-Grade 3 teaching certificates, incorporating early childhood education training into elementary principal certification, and aligning quality improvement efforts from early childhood through third grade.⁷

Children in Full-Day Public Kindergarten Programs, Rhode Island, 2002-2003 Through 2016-2017 School Years



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, kindergarten enrollment October 1, 2002–October 1, 2016.

- ◆ In the 2016-2017 school year, 100% of the 10,059 children enrolled in public kindergarten in Rhode Island were in full-day kindergarten classrooms.⁸ State legislation enacted in 2015 required all districts to implement full-day kindergarten by August 2016.⁹
- ◆ Children in full-day kindergarten make significant gains in early reading, math, and social skills when compared with children in half-day kindergarten.¹⁰

Kindergarten Entry Assessments

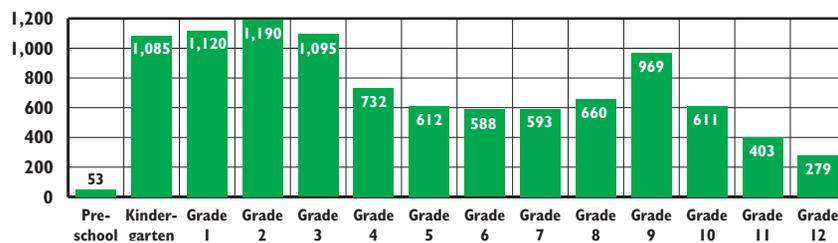
- ◆ Kindergarten entry assessments are an organized way to learn what children know and are able to do across all domains of development when they enter kindergarten. The information is used to improve the transition to kindergarten, guide instruction for individual children, and inform policymakers about early learning needs. These assessments should not be used for high-stakes decisions, such as delaying children's entry into kindergarten.^{11,12}
- ◆ As of January 2017, 32 states were using an assessment tool to track skills and knowledge at kindergarten entry. Rhode Island has not yet implemented a statewide tool, but has worked with a consortium of states led by North Carolina to develop and field-test a new, comprehensive Kindergarten Entry Profile that incorporates best practices for young children.¹³
- ◆ Kindergarten teachers can share information about children's strengths and challenges gathered through kindergarten entry assessments to engage parents as partners in the education process.¹⁴

Children Enrolled in Kindergarten

Young English Language Learners

- ◆ Language learning is most effective and efficient during the early childhood years, between birth and age eight. Infants and young children learn new languages faster and with more competence than older children and adults.¹⁵
- ◆ Being bilingual has several advantages, including expanded economic and social opportunities and higher level executive function skills (cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control) that contribute to academic success. Being bilingual also may help delay or prevent the onset of cognitive problems associated with aging.¹⁶
- ◆ Both bilingual education and English immersion programs can effectively promote English language acquisition and proficiency. Bilingual education has the added advantage of supporting the development of a child’s native language, encouraging fluency in both languages.¹⁷
- ◆ In Rhode Island, kindergarten through third grades have high levels of English Language Learner students. In 2015-2016, 12% of all kindergartners in Rhode Island (1,085) were English Language Learners. Almost half (47%) of these kindergartners were enrolled in the Providence Public Schools. There were 13 school districts and four public charter schools in the state that had 10 or more English Language Learner students enrolled in kindergarten. There were another 12 school districts and three public charter schools that had at least one kindergartner who was an English Language Learner.¹⁸

English Language Learners by Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2015-2016 School Year



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015-2016.

References

¹⁸ Rhode Island Department of Education, October 1, 2016 enrollment.

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Kindergartners and School Suspensions

- ◆ Children who are suspended early in their school years are more likely to be suspended again in future years. Students who are suspended are almost ten times more likely to experience academic failure, have negative attitudes toward school, drop out of high school, and become incarcerated.¹⁹
- ◆ Early suspensions are more likely when teachers believe the resources and supports available to them are inadequate to meet the needs of children with challenging behaviors. Large class sizes, inadequate child-teacher ratios, and lack of school resources to help teachers manage challenging behaviors are associated with increased suspensions.²⁰ Early childhood mental health consultation is an intervention that works with teachers and families to reduce children’s challenging behaviors, improve child-adult relationships, and prevent early suspensions.²¹

School Suspensions in Kindergarten, Rhode Island, 2015-2016

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF KINDERGARTNERS SUSPENDED	NUMBER OF SUSPENSIONS FOR KINDERGARTNERS	NUMBER OF DAYS KINDERGARTNERS WERE SUSPENDED
Central Falls	0	0	0
Pawtucket	0	0	0
Providence	17	29	38
Woonsocket	17	38	49
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>139</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>268</i>

- ◆ In 2015-2016 in Rhode Island, there were 106 kindergartners who were suspended at least one day, 45% of whom had a developmental delay or disability. Kindergartners experienced 197 disciplinary actions, with 179 out-of-school suspensions and 18 in-school suspensions. These students were suspended for a total of 268 days.²²
- ◆ Of the 35 traditional public school districts that had kindergartners enrolled in 2015-2016, 16 had no suspensions for kindergartners and 19 had at least one kindergarten suspension: Bristol Warren, Burrillville, Chariho, Cranston, East Greenwich, East Providence, Johnston, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Providence, Smithfield, Tiverton, Warwick, Westerly, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.²³