

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

DEFINITION

Children enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K is the percentage of low-income children and all children enrolled in a Rhode Island Head Start or State Pre-K preschool program the year before kindergarten. Head Start is managed by the federal government and State Pre-K is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Both can be operated by community-based agencies or by public schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children begin learning at birth and brain development proceeds rapidly in early childhood. Learning disparities appear early and grow over time without access to enriching early learning experiences. Participation in high-quality early learning programs from birth through kindergarten entry helps to ensure children enter school with the skills needed to succeed. Without government funding, access to high-quality preschool is limited to higher-income families.^{1,2,3}

Decades of research have shown that high-quality preschool programs help children gain skills and knowledge prior to school entry and produce positive outcomes that last well into the school years including improved classroom and interpersonal behavior, reduced need for special education services, and improved high school graduation rates.⁴

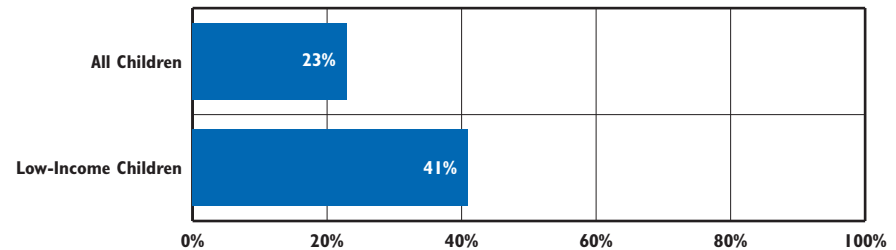
Head Start is a federally-funded

comprehensive early childhood program for the lowest income preschool children and is available to children during the two years before kindergarten. It is designed to address a wide variety of needs so that low-income children can begin school on a more equal footing with their economically advantaged peers. Head Start programs deliver early education, medical and dental screenings and referrals, nutrition services, mental health services, family engagement activities, and social service referrals for the whole family.^{5,6}

State-funded Pre-K programs are growing across the U.S. As of 2016, 43 states and the District of Columbia operated State Pre-K programs, serving 32% of four-year-olds and 5% of three-year olds across the U.S. Rhode Island launched a State Pre-K program in 2009 serving four-year-olds in mixed-income classrooms, with classrooms located in communities with high poverty levels.⁷ *The Rhode Island Prekindergarten Education Act* acknowledges the need to adequately prepare all children to succeed in school by providing access to publicly-funded, high-quality Pre-K that builds on the existing early childhood education infrastructure.⁸

Head Start and State Pre-K are an important part of a strong state early learning system that starts at birth and continues through third grade, including high-quality child care and nurturing and language-rich early elementary classrooms.⁹

Percent of Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K the Year before Kindergarten, Rhode Island, 2017-2018



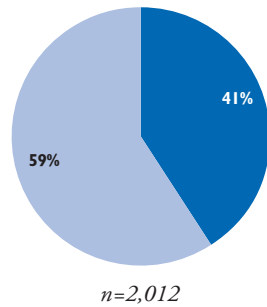
Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations using October 2017 enrollment in Head Start and State Pre-K as numerator and October 2017 enrollment in public kindergarten as denominator with low-income population estimated using the % of children receiving free or reduced price lunch.

- ◆ As of the 2017-2018 school year, there were 2,267 children enrolled in either Head Start or State Pre-K during the year before kindergarten, approximately 23% of all children and 41% of low-income children. Fifty-two percent of these children were enrolled in Head Start and 48% were enrolled in State Pre-K.^{10,11}
- ◆ Low-income children in the four core cities were more likely to be enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K (52%) than low-income children in the remainder of the state (38%).^{12,13}
- ◆ Also in 2017, there were 1,317 four-year-olds enrolled in a child care program with a subsidy through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) managed by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services. Children in State Pre-K or Head Start may also participate in CCAP because Head Start and State Pre-K do not cover the entire work day or work year for many families. In 2017, 16% of Head Start children were also enrolled in CCAP to cover hours and days when the Head Start program is not open but parents are at work.^{14,15}
- ◆ In 2017 there were 1,093 four-year-olds with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) receiving early childhood special education services through a local school district. These services are delivered in Head Start, State Pre-K, child care, or district operated special education classrooms, or through walk-in appointments (e.g. speech therapy).¹⁶

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

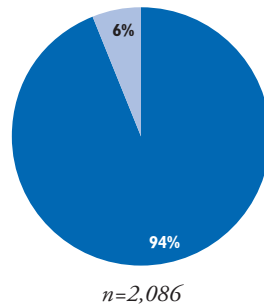
Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age Cohort, Rhode Island, 2017

41% (825) ■ Two Years before Kindergarten
59% (1,187) ■ One Year before Kindergarten



Head Start Slots by Funding Source, Rhode Island, 2017

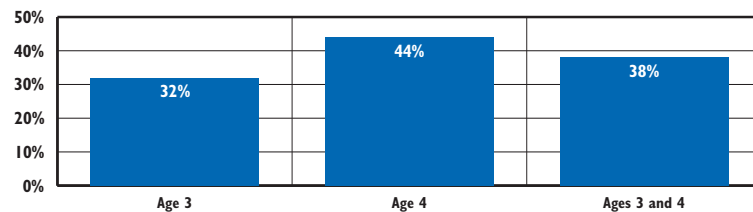
94% (1,956) ■ Federally-Funded
6% (130) ■ State-Funded



Source: Rhode Island Head Start program data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2017.

◆ In 2017 in Rhode Island, there were 2,012 children enrolled in Head Start. The majority of children (59%) were scheduled to enter kindergarten in the 2018-2019 school year. As of the 2017-2018 school year, there were 1,956 federally-funded Head Start slots in Rhode Island and 130 state-funded Head Start slots.¹⁷

Percent of Children Eligible/in Poverty Enrolled in Head Start by Age, Rhode Island, 2017



Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations. The numerator is Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data, October 2017. The denominator is the estimated number of children ages three and four from Census 2010 multiplied by the % of children under age six living in families with incomes below the federal poverty line (FPL) from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey.

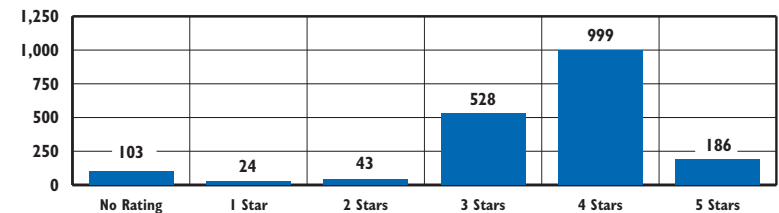
◆ As of 2017, approximately 38% of Rhode Island preschool-age children living in poverty who were eligible were enrolled in Head Start (32% of the three-year-olds and 44% of the four-year-olds).¹⁸

Head Start Quality & Effectiveness

◆ Across the U.S., Head Start centers are typically higher quality than many other early care and education programs available. Rhode Island Head Start programs score above the national benchmark and are among the highest quality Head Start programs in the U.S. based on classroom observations of teacher-child interactions.¹⁹

◆ Head Start improves children's academic, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills. Children who attend Head Start also show improved health outcomes including reduced childhood obesity and improved immunization rates. Head Start children are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college and are less likely to be charged with criminal activity as an adult.^{20,21}

Children Enrolled In Head Start by BrightStars Rating of Program Site, Rhode Island, 2017



Source: Rhode Island Head Start data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2017.

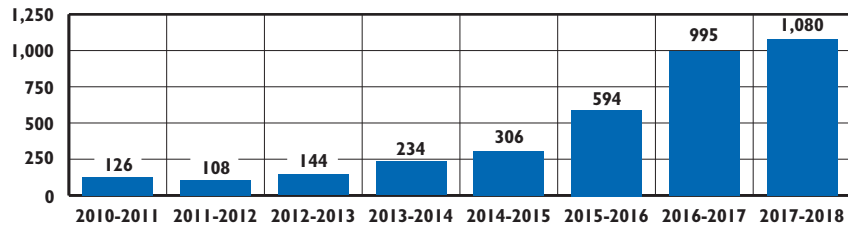
◆ As of October 2017, 63% of children enrolled in Head Start were in program sites that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating of four or five stars. In comparison, only 13% of preschoolers in CCAP were enrolled in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating.^{22,23}

Head Start & Children with High Needs

◆ As of 2017, 9% (189) of all children enrolled in Head Start had developmental delays or disabilities and received special education services through their local school districts. Also in 2017, 2% (39) of Head Start children were in foster care, and 2% (37) were homeless.²⁴ As of the 2014-15 school year, 42% of the children enrolled in Head Start in Rhode Island were Hispanic/Latino and 18% spoke Spanish as a home language.²⁵

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

Rhode Island State Pre-K Enrollment, 2010-2011 through 2017-2018



Sources: National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015*. Rhode Island Department of Education, State Pre-K programs 2015-2016 through 2017-2018.

- ◆ Rhode Island began offering State Pre-K for four-year-olds in the 2009-2010 school year through public schools, Head Start agencies, and child care programs.²⁶
- ◆ As of the 2017-2018 school year, there were 60 state Pre-K classrooms in Rhode Island with a total of 1,080 children enrolled, which is approximately 11% of all children estimated to enter kindergarten in 2018-2019. As of the 2017-2018 school year, 37% of the classrooms were operated by Head Start agencies, 35% were operated by child care programs, and 28% were operated by public schools.²⁷
- ◆ The Rhode Island State Pre-K program is funded through the Rhode Island Education new Funding Formula. In 2014, Rhode Island received a federal Preschool Development Grant to accelerate expansion and to improve program monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance.²⁸

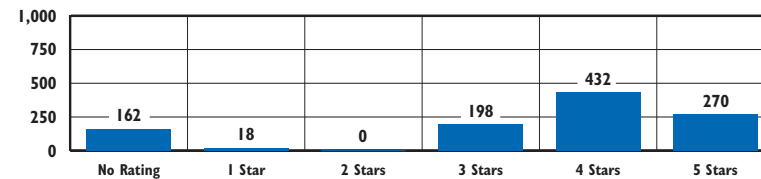
Children Enrolled in State Pre-K by Family Income, Rhode Island, 2017-2018

- ◆ 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.^{29,30}
- ◆ As of the 2017-2018 school year, 71% (764) of the children enrolled in State Pre-K were low-income and 29% (316) were higher-income.³¹

State Pre-K Quality and Effectiveness

- ◆ In 2016 the Rhode Island State Pre-K program was recognized as one of only two State Pre-K programs in the U.S. to meet all 10 recommended quality benchmarks, including requiring teachers to have bachelor's degrees with specialized training in early childhood education and conducting annual classroom observations.³²
- ◆ An evaluation of the Rhode Island State Pre-K program found that it improves children's language and math skills and closes the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers by three-quarters.³³

Children Enrolled In State Pre-K Classrooms by BrightStars Rating of Program Site, Rhode Island, 2017



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017.

- ◆ As of 2017, 65% of children enrolled in State Pre-K were in program sites with high-quality BrightStars ratings (four or five stars). In comparison, only 13% of preschoolers in CCAP were enrolled in programs with high-quality BrightStars ratings.^{34,35}

State Pre-K and Children with High Needs

- ◆ Rhode Island State Pre-K classrooms serve significant numbers of children with high needs. As of 2017, 9% (95) of children in State Pre-K had developmental delays or disabilities, 3% (30) were in foster care, and 1% (14) were homeless.³⁶
- ◆ As of 2017, 34% of the children enrolled in State Pre-K in Rhode Island were Hispanic/Latino and 20% spoke Spanish as a home language.³⁷

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

Table 39.

Children Age Four Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K, Rhode Island, 2017

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ESTIMATED # OF CHILDREN AGE 4	% LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN DISTRICT	ESTIMATED # LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 4	# CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START (ALL LOW-INCOME)	# LOW-INCOME CHILDREN IN STATE PRE-K	# HIGHER-INCOME CHILDREN IN STATE PRE-K	# CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START OR STATE PRE-K	ESTIMATED % OF ALL CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START OR STATE PRE-K	ESTIMATED % OF LOW-INCOME CHILDREN AGE 4 IN HEAD START OR STATE PRE-K
Barrington	194	5%	10	4	0	0	4	2%	41%
Bristol Warren	253	31%	78	25	0	0	25	10%	32%
Burrillville	135	29%	39	9	0	0	9	7%	23%
Central Falls	174	76%	132	46	76	14	136	78%	92%
Chariho	184	17%	31	6	0	0	6	3%	19%
Coventry	317	30%	95	40	0	0	40	13%	42%
Cranston	703	43%	302	130	38	16	184	26%	56%
Cumberland	342	22%	75	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
East Greenwich	147	5%	7	1	0	0	1	1%	14%
East Providence	374	51%	191	30	72	72	174	47%	53%
Exeter-West Greenwich	115	14%	16	1	0	0	1	1%	6%
Foster	31	20%	6	1	0	0	1	3%	16%
Glocester	83	14%	12	3	0	0	3	4%	26%
Jamestown	51	10%	5	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Johnston	229	45%	103	20	8	10	38	17%	27%
Lincoln	198	23%	46	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Little Compton	20	9%	2	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	168	31%	52	14	0	0	14	8%	27%
Narragansett	70	18%	13	1	0	0	1	1%	8%
New Shoreham	8	18%	1	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Newport	190	64%	122	32	36	18	86	45%	56%
North Kingstown	206	22%	45	9	0	0	9	4%	20%
North Providence	246	52%	128	33	8	10	51	21%	32%
North Smithfield	111	17%	19	1	0	0	1	1%	5%
Pawtucket	662	61%	404	158	84	24	266	40%	60%
Portsmouth	153	17%	26	6	0	0	6	4%	23%
Providence	1,687	87%	1,468	349	300	60	709	42%	44%
Scituate	78	16%	12	1	0	0	1	1%	8%
Smithfield	149	14%	21	1	0	0	1	1%	5%
South Kingstown	204	17%	35	6	0	0	6	3%	17%
Tiverton	134	23%	31	5	0	0	5	4%	16%
Warwick	644	31%	200	57	22	32	111	17%	40%
West Warwick	295	46%	136	50	22	32	104	35%	53%
Westerly	186	37%	69	17	0	0	17	9%	25%
Woonsocket	478	72%	344	131	98	28	257	54%	67%
Charter Schools	781	67%	523	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
RI School for the Deaf	6	64%	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	3,001	79%	2,371	684	558	126	1,368	46%	52%
Remainder of State	6,218	30%	1,865	503	206	190	899	14%	38%
Rhode Island	10,006	47%	4,703	1,187	764	316	2,267	23%	41%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2017 who were one year away from kindergarten enrollment. Children enrolled are listed by residence of child, not location of the Head Start program. Rhode Island Department of Education, children enrolled in State Pre-K as of October 2017.

The estimated number of low income children age four in each school district is based on October 2017 kindergarten enrollment multiplied by the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced price lunch (at or below 185% of the federal poverty level).

The city/town table was redesigned in 2018 to include data on four-year-olds in either Head Start or State Pre-K. Data are tracked by school district community and use kindergarten enrollment as the denominator (estimated # of four-year-olds in the community served by the school district). Percentages should not be compared with prior Factbooks.

Charter Schools with kindergarten include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, and South Side Elementary Charter School.

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

References

- Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). *A science-based framework for early childhood policy: Using evidence to improve outcomes in learning, behavior, and health for vulnerable children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Yoshikawa, H., et al. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Research in Child Development and New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development.
- Child Trends. (2014). *Early childhood program enrollment*. Retrieved March 4, 2018, from www.childtrends.org/databank

(continued on page 186)