

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}

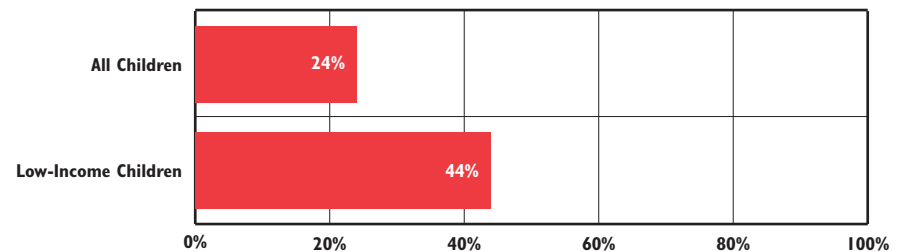
Decades of research have shown that high-quality preschool programs help children gain skills and knowledge prior to school entry and produce positive outcomes that last well into the school years including improved classroom and interpersonal behavior, reduced need for special education services, and 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 2017, 43 states and the District of Columbia operated State Pre-K programs, serving 33% 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* establishes a state goal to provide 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

Percentage of Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K the Year before Kindergarten, Rhode Island 2018-2019



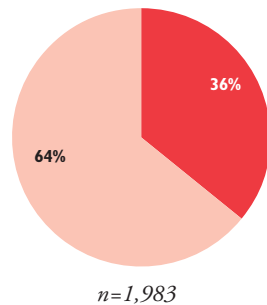
Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations using October 2018 enrollment in Head Start and State Pre-K as numerator and October 2018 enrollment in public kindergarten as denominator with low-income population estimated using the % of children receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

- ◆ As of the 2018-2019 school year, there were 2,359 children enrolled in either Head Start or State Pre-K during the year before kindergarten, approximately 24% of all children and 44% of low-income children. Fifty-four percent of these children were enrolled in Head Start and 46% 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 (42%).^{12,13}
- ◆ Also, in 2018, there were 1,291 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 2018, 20% 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 2018 there were 1,062 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
- ◆ As of 2017, Rhode Island ranked 1st in the U.S. and DC (tied with Alabama and Michigan) for meeting research-based Pre-K quality benchmarks, but 33rd in the U.S. and DC for enrollment of four-year-olds.¹⁷

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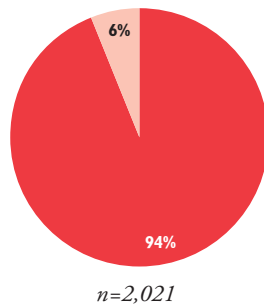
Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age Cohort, Rhode Island, 2018

36% (704) ■ Two Years before Kindergarten
64% (1,279) ■ One Year before Kindergarten



Head Start Slots by Funding Source, Rhode Island, 2018

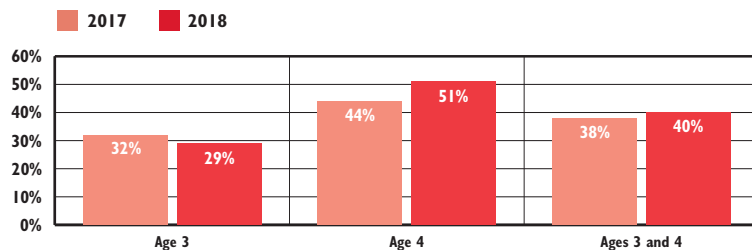
94% (1,891) ■ Federally-Funded
6% (130) ■ State-Funded



Source: Rhode Island Head Start program data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2018.

◆ In October 2018 in Rhode Island, there were 1,983 children enrolled in Head Start. Most children (64%) were scheduled to enter kindergarten in the 2019-2020 school year. As of the 2018-2019 school year, there were 1,891 federally-funded Head Start slots in Rhode Island and 130 state-funded Head Start slots.¹⁸

Estimated Percentage of Eligible Children Enrolled in Head Start by Age, Rhode Island, 2017-2018



Source: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations. The numerator is Rhode Island Head Start program enrollment data, October 2017 and 2018. 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 and 2013-2017 American Community Surveys.

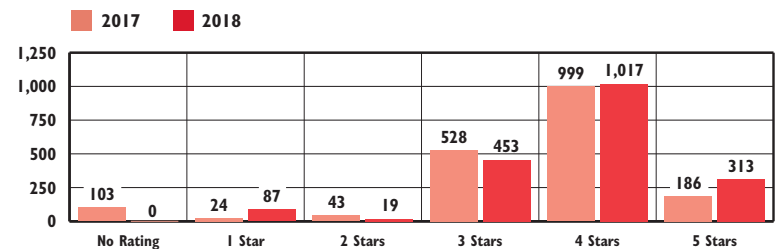
◆ As of 2018, approximately 40% of Rhode Island preschool-age children living in poverty were enrolled in Head Start (29% of the three-year-olds and 51% of the four-year-olds).¹⁹

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.²⁰

◆ 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.^{21,22}

Children Enrolled in Head Start by BrightStars Rating of Site, Rhode Island, 2017-2018



Source: Rhode Island Head Start data compiled by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, October 2017-2018.

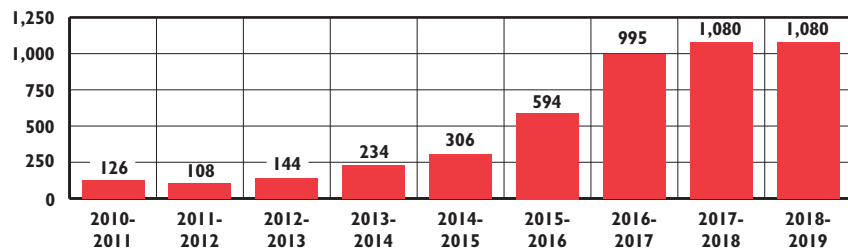
◆ As of October 2018, 70% of children enrolled in Head Start were in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating of four or five stars. In comparison, only 12% of preschoolers in the CCAP were enrolled in a program that had achieved a high-quality BrightStars rating.^{23,24}

Head Start and Children with High Needs

◆ Rhode Island Head Start programs serve significant numbers of children with high needs. As of 2018, 11% (224) of all children enrolled in Head Start had developmental delays or disabilities and received special education services through their local school districts. Also, in 2018, 3% (53) of Head Start children were in foster care, and 3% (53) were homeless.²⁵

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

Rhode Island State Pre-K Enrollment, 2010-2011 through 2018-2019



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 2018-2019.

- ◆ 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 2018-2019 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 2019-2020. As of the 2018-2019 school year, 37% of the classrooms were operated by Head Start agencies, 33% were operated by child care programs, and 30% were operated by public schools.²⁷

- ◆ The Rhode Island State Pre-K program is funded through the Rhode Island Education 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

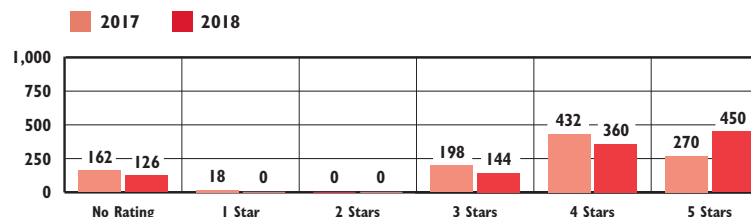
State Pre-K Enrollment and Family Income

- ◆ 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
- ◆ As of the 2018-2019 school year, 71% (768) of the children enrolled in State Pre-K were low-income and 29% (312) were higher-income.³⁰

State Pre-K Quality and Effectiveness

- ◆ In 2017 the Rhode Island State Pre-K program was recognized as one of only three State Pre-K programs in the U.S. to meet all 10 recommended quality benchmarks, including requiring teachers to have a bachelor's degree with specialized training in early childhood education and conducting annual classroom observations.³¹
- ◆ 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.³²

Children Enrolled in State Pre-K by BrightStars Rating of Site, Rhode Island, 2017-2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2018.

- ◆ As of 2018, 75% of children enrolled in State Pre-K were in program sites with high-quality BrightStars ratings (four or five stars). In comparison, only 12% of preschoolers in CCAP were enrolled in programs with high-quality BrightStars ratings.^{33,34}

State Pre-K and Children with High Needs

- ◆ Rhode Island State Pre-K classrooms serve significant numbers of children with high needs. As of 2018, 12% (126) of children in State Pre-K had developmental delays or disabilities, 2% (26) were in foster care, and 1% (10) were homeless.³⁵
- ◆ As of 2018, 37% of the children enrolled in State Pre-K in Rhode Island were Hispanic and 25% spoke Spanish as a home language.³⁶

Children Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K

Table 40.

Children Age Four Enrolled in Head Start or State Pre-K, Rhode Island, 2018

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	206	4%	8	1	0	0	1	<1%	12%
Bristol Warren	214	30%	64	44	0	0	44	21%	69%
Burrillville	147	30%	44	6	0	0	6	4%	14%
Central Falls	193	91%	176	57	80	10	147	76%	78%
Chariho	190	20%	38	9	0	0	9	5%	24%
Coventry	321	31%	100	22	0	0	22	7%	22%
Cranston	740	43%	318	101	33	39	173	23%	42%
Cumberland	313	19%	59	6	0	0	6	2%	10%
East Greenwich	156	5%	8	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
East Providence	356	48%	171	54	78	66	198	56%	77%
Exeter-West Greenwich	108	16%	17	1	0	0	1	1%	6%
Foster	34	24%	8	1	0	0	1	3%	12%
Glocester	80	12%	10	3	0	0	3	4%	31%
Jamestown	54	8%	4	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Johnston	236	45%	106	18	8	10	36	15%	24%
Lincoln	202	27%	55	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Little Compton	16	12%	2	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Middletown	139	30%	42	23	0	0	23	17%	55%
Narragansett	62	21%	13	2	0	0	2	3%	15%
New Shoreham	12	16%	2	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Newport	154	66%	102	46	26	10	82	53%	71%
North Kingstown	261	22%	57	12	0	0	12	5%	21%
North Providence	214	38%	81	35	8	10	53	25%	53%
North Smithfield	116	16%	19	5	0	0	5	4%	27%
Pawtucket	665	76%	505	134	86	22	242	36%	44%
Portsmouth	148	14%	21	4	0	0	4	3%	19%
Providence	1,676	84%	1,408	420	302	58	780	47%	51%
Scituate	149	18%	27	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
Smithfield	157	14%	22	3	0	0	3	2%	14%
South Kingstown	201	17%	34	7	0	0	7	3%	20%
Tiverton	117	24%	28	6	0	0	6	5%	21%
Warwick	640	29%	186	70	18	36	124	19%	47%
West Warwick	281	50%	141	51	30	24	105	37%	58%
Westerly	173	36%	62	23	0	0	23	13%	37%
Woonsocket	474	79%	374	115	99	27	241	51%	57%
Charter Schools	794	67%	532	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
RI School for the Deaf	5	66%	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	3,008	82%	2,467	726	567	117	1,410	47%	52%
Remainder of State	6,197	29%	1,797	553	201	195	949	15%	42%
Rhode Island	10,004	47%	4,702	1,279	768	312	2,359	24%	44%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Head Start Programs, children enrolled as of October 2018 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 2018.

The estimated number of low-income children age four in each school district is based on October 2018 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.

NA is not applicable.

References

- ¹ 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.
- ² Meloy, B., Gardner, M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). *Untangling the evidence on preschool effectiveness: Insights for policymakers*. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute.
- ³ *Early childhood program enrollment*. (2014). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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