



EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

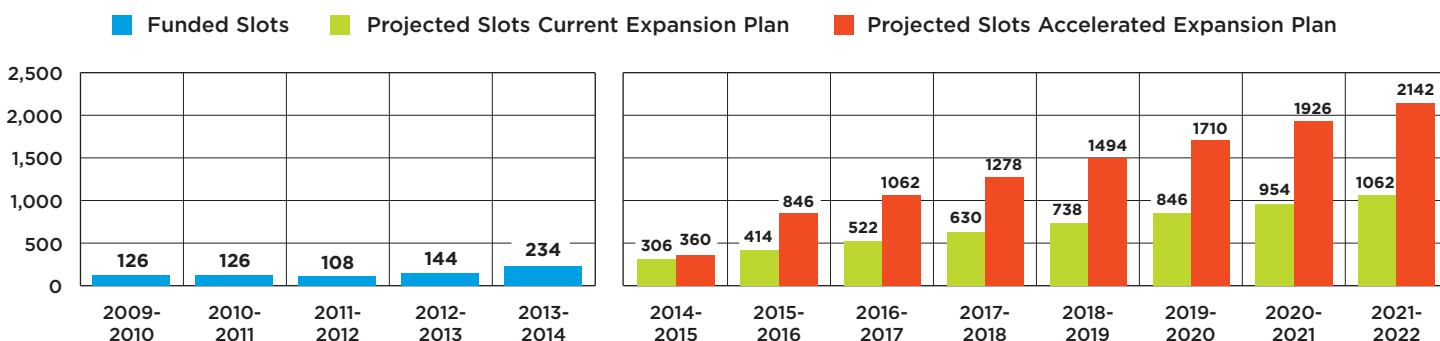
Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8

Focus on the State Pre-K Program

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**. The law required 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. Rhode Island began offering the State Pre-K program for four-year-olds in the 2009-2010 school year.¹

The Rhode Island State Pre-K program is one of only four in the U.S. to meet all recommended quality benchmarks.² Additionally, the state invests in ongoing professional development, on-site monitoring and technical assistance, and evaluation to ensure the Pre-K program has strong, positive impacts on children's development and learning. Rhode Island's State Pre-K program has been found to improve children's language and literacy skills and close the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers by three-quarters.³

RHODE ISLAND STATE PRE-K SLOTS, 2009-2010 THROUGH 2021-2022



Sources: National Institute for Early Education Research, *The State of Preschool 2010, 2011, 2012*. Rhode Island Department of Education, State Pre-K programs 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. Current expansion plan projected slots are based on \$3 million in the Governor's proposed FY15 budget with \$1 million increase per year until \$10 million/year is reached in FY2022. Accelerated expansion projected slots are based on \$3.5 million for FY15 budget with \$2 million increase per year until \$20 million/year is reached in FY2022. (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations.)

- Rhode Island's high-quality State Pre-K program has grown slowly. In the 2013-2014 school year there were 234 children enrolled in State Pre-K (2% of four-year-olds in the state, up from 1% in the previous school year).⁴ In 2012-2013 Rhode Island ranked 41st in the U.S. for Pre-K access.⁵
- Expansion of the Rhode Island State Pre-K program is included in the state's education funding formula, with a \$1 million increase in funding planned each year until state funding reaches \$10 million per year and 1,062 children (9% of four-year-olds) are enrolled in 2021-2022.^{6,7} New federal preschool expansion grant funding is available to match state funding and would help to accelerate Rhode Islands' Pre-K expansion plan.⁸ An accelerated funding plan using more state and federal resources would double the planned annual increase to reach 2,142 children (18% of four-year-olds) with \$20 million in annual funding by 2021-2022. Further acceleration to reach \$30 million in annual funding by 2021-2022 would allow 3,222 children to enroll (27% of four-year-olds).

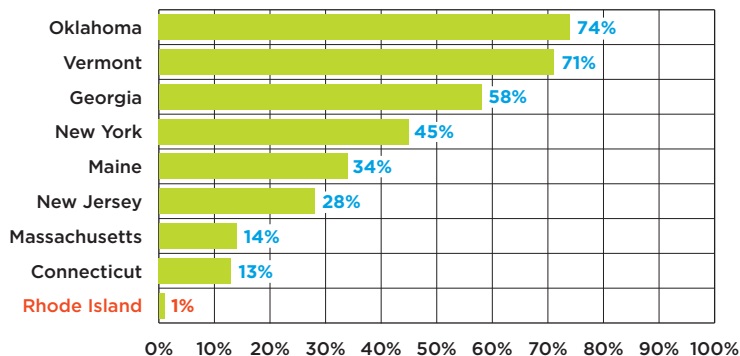
States Invest in Pre-K to Improve Learning Outcomes

State-funded Pre-K programs for children ages three and four are available in 40 states and the District of Columbia. Eight states and the District of Columbia have more than half of their four-year-olds enrolled in State Pre-K.¹⁰

PERCENT OF CHILDREN AGE FOUR ENROLLED IN STATE PRE-K, SELECTED STATES, 2012-2013

■ States invest in Pre-K because they know 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.^{11,12,13}

■ Rhode Island's State Pre-K program is managed by the Rhode Island Department of Education and is operated by child care programs, Head Start programs, and public schools selected through a competitive process. Funds are targeted to communities with higher proportions 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 through a lottery with children from families at or below 185% of the federal poverty level prioritized for enrollment based on the proportion of low-income children in the local school district.¹⁴



Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). *The State of Preschool 2013*.

Recommendations

- Continue the planned expansion of the State Pre-K program as part of the education funding formula to reach at least 9% of four year olds by 2021-2022.
- Pursue state and federal funding opportunities to accelerate expansion of State Pre-K to reach 18% to 27% of four-year-olds by 2021-2022.. Encourage district investments of Title I funds to accelerate expansion.
- Maintain commitment to meeting all recommended Pre-K quality benchmarks.

References

^{1,4,6,14} Children enrolled in State Pre-K. *2014 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

^{2,5,10} Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Squires, J. H., & Brown, K. C. (2013). *The state of preschool 2013: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

³ Barnett, W. S. (2012, February 14). *Rhode Island State Pre-K Demonstration Program evaluation*. Presentation to the Rhode Island General Assembly.

^{7,9} Rhode Island KIDS COUNT calculations using \$9,300 funding per child with 18 children per classroom.

⁸ *Public comment sought for new preschool development grants competition*. (2014, May 5). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Lamy, C. (2012). Poverty is a knot, and preschool is an untangler. In R. C. Pianta, W. S. Barnett, L. M. Justice & S. M. Sheridan (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood education*. (pp. 158-174). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

¹³ 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.



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903

Phone: 401-351-9400
rikids@rikidscount.org
www.rikidscount.org



Special thanks to the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust at The Boston Foundation for its support of the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Early Learning Fact Sheet series.