Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program was launched as a prekindergarten demonstration initiative in the fall of 2009. As of September 2012, the program was available to 144 4-year-old children, in eight classrooms, located in five of the state’s urban communities. The program is available to all children in each participating community who are 4 years old by September 1, though enrollment is determined by a lottery. Public schools, private child care, and Head Start programs are eligible to apply to the competitive Request for Proposal process, conducted by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program is included in the state’s school funding formula, enacted through legislation in 2010. The funding formula includes a 10-year expansion plan for Pre-K that will increase the state investment each year for ten years, up to $10 million total. The state budget for the 2012-2013 school year fully backed the education funding formula, including the state Pre-K program.

State pre-K teachers must have a bachelor’s degree with an early childhood teaching diploma. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides training and technical assistance on an ongoing basis. The Rhode Island Pre-Kindergarten Program has been assessed for both process quality and program impact/child outcomes, including classroom quality and child outcomes in literacy, arithmetic, and social-emotional development.

Rhode Island was one of nine states to receive a grant in the first round of the federal Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge. Some of the funds will go towards improving the quality of early childhood education programs in high-needs communities. The state will also gather data on children’s access to early learning opportunities and link it with kindergarten entry assessment data. Future policy and funding choices will be influenced by findings from an early learning data system. RTT-ELC funds will also be used to provide comprehensive, high-quality professional development, and technical assistance.

Through the Department of Human Services, Rhode Island complements the federal Head Start program with state funding, to provide additional spaces for children. Funding for this program has remained static for several years. In the 2012-2013 year, approximately $800,000 from state general funds were used to serve 130 children ages 4 and 5 through this program.
RHODE ISLAND PREKINDERGARTEN DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

ACCES
Total state program enrollment ..........................................................144
School districts that offer state program ........................................18% (towns)
Income requirement ........................................................................None
Hours of operation .................................................................6 hours/day, 5 days/week
Operating schedule .................................................................Academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..............................1,717
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..............1,858
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ....................80

ACCESS
Total state program enrollment ..........................................................144
School districts that offer state program ........................................18% (towns)
Income requirement ........................................................................None
Hours of operation .................................................................6 hours/day, 5 days/week
Operating schedule .................................................................Academic year
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..............................1,717
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..............1,858
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ....................80

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT BENCHMARK
Early learning standards .........................................................Comprehensive Comprehensive
Teacher degree .................................................................BA BA
Teacher specialized training .................................................Early Childhood (P-2) Specializing in pre-K
Assistant teacher degree .....................................................HSD + 12 college credits CDA or equivalent
Teacher in-service .............................................................20 clock hours/year At least 15 hours/year
Maximum class size ...............................................................20 or lower
3-year-olds ..............................................................................NA
4-year-olds ..............................................................................18
Staff-child ratio ........................................................................1:10 or better
3-year-olds ..............................................................................NA
4-year-olds ..............................................................................1:9
Screening/referral .................................................................Vision, hearing, health; and Vision, hearing, health; and
and support services development; and support services at least 1 support service
Meals .................................................................................Lunch and snack At least 1/day
Monitoring ..............................................................................Site visits Site visits

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending .........................................................$1,336,000
Local match required? ...............................................................No
State spending per child enrolled .............................................$9,278
All reported spending per child enrolled* ..............................$9,278

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
** Head Start per-child spending for the 2012-2013 year includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds served. Past years figured have unintentionally included funds for Early Head Start.
*** K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.
Data are for the '12-'13 school year, unless otherwise noted.

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

3-YEAR-OLDS 4-YEAR-OLDS
88% 6% 6%
82% 10% 7%

1 Rhode Island was not able to break its state-funded Head Start enrollment down by single year of age. As a result, this figure is an estimate based on the percentage of federal Head Start enrollees in Rhode Island who were 3 or 4 years old.
2 Each program is required to collaborate with its local Child Outreach program, which conducts screenings and referrals. Support services include parent conferences and/or home visits, parent involvement activities, and transition to kindergarten activities.