



# EARLY LEARNING FACT SHEET

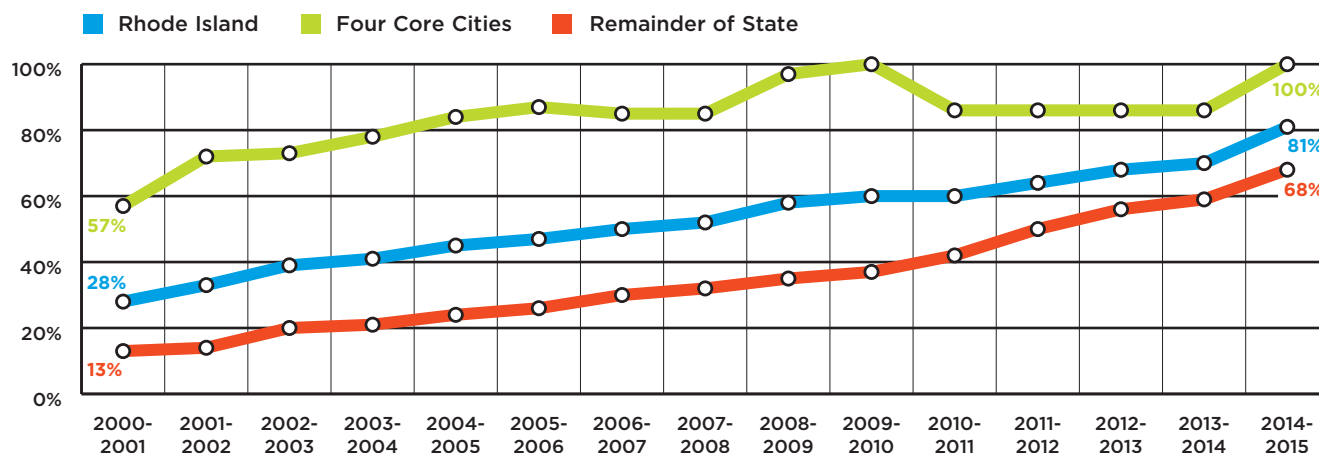
*Promoting early learning and development Birth to 8*

## Focus on Kindergarten

**Kindergarten is an essential part of a child's education.** High-quality early education from preschool through third grade helps children acquire critical cognitive, language, social, and emotional skills - establishing the foundation for all future learning.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that children who participate in **full-day kindergarten** show improved learning outcomes compared with children in half-day programs. They make significant gains in social skills and early reading and math skills compared with children in half-day kindergarten. Participation in full-day kindergarten is also associated with improved attendance and reduced grade retention.<sup>2,3</sup>

CHILDREN IN FULL-DAY PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS, RHODE ISLAND, 2000-2001 THROUGH 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEARS



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, kindergarten enrollment, October 1, 2000 – October 1, 2014. Note: Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

## Access to Full-Day Kindergarten in Rhode Island

- During the 2014-2015 school year, **81% of Rhode Island kindergartners were enrolled in full-day classrooms.** Only seven districts did not offer universal full-day kindergarten: Coventry, Cranston, East Greenwich, Johnston, North Kingstown, Tiverton, and Warwick. Three of these districts offered limited enrollment in full-day kindergarten classrooms (East Greenwich, North Kingstown, and Warwick).<sup>4</sup>
- **Legislation enacted in 2015 requires all districts to implement full-day kindergarten by August 2016.** The FY2016 state budget allocates \$1.4 million so that the remaining seven districts in Rhode Island that do not offer universal full-day kindergarten can implement it by the 2016-2017 school year.<sup>5</sup>

## Teaching and Learning in Kindergarten

- **High-quality kindergarten has a lasting impact.** The quality of kindergarten instruction and the development of strong skills in kindergarten are both associated with improved adult outcomes. A recent study found that kindergartners with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to be successful as adults – including having better high school and college completion rates, improved employment stability, and reduced criminal activity.<sup>6,7</sup>
- **High-quality kindergarten promotes children’s learning across all learning domains (physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional).** Experts recommend that educators of all children in preschool through Grade 3 have specialized training in child development and early education.<sup>8,9</sup>
- **Kindergarten children learn best through active engagement** with educational materials, the environment, adults, and other children. Hands-on, in-depth projects help children strengthen thinking, problem-solving, and language skills while building knowledge of content and concepts.<sup>10,11</sup> See [www.nj.gov/education/ece/k/hqktoday](http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/k/hqktoday) for video footage of high-quality kindergarten practices.
- Effective teachers gather information about children’s skills and knowledge so they can provide appropriate instruction to promote learning and development. **Kindergarten Entry Assessments are an organized way to learn what children know and are able to do across all domains of development** as they start the kindergarten year.<sup>12</sup>
- Information gathered through **Kindergarten Entry Assessments is used to guide instruction** for individual children. Aggregated information can also be used to **inform efforts to improve early childhood systems**, both before and after the kindergarten years. The assessment process can also be used to improve the transition to kindergarten – bringing families, the early childhood community and elementary schools together in understanding children as they enter kindergarten.<sup>13</sup>
- Rhode Island is working with several other states and national experts to develop a new, comprehensive kindergarten entry assessment system incorporating best practices for young children, called the **Kindergarten Entry Profile**. The new tool will be piloted in several districts in Rhode Island in the 2015-2016 school year.<sup>14</sup>

## References

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