

Head Start and Governor Raimondo's Universal Pre-K Initiative

It's the Rhode Island way.

Every child deserves a shot at a bright future, and there is no better preparation for a child's future than a high-quality early education.

Highlights: What you need to know

We know that of all the things we want our children to have, there is nothing we can give them that is better than a great start. We have achieved a great deal but we have miles to go. We won't stop until every child has access to high-quality Pre-K—because that's the Rhode Island way.

- Head Start is one of Rhode Island's most important providers of early childhood education.
- Head Start is essential to the Governor's plan to provide high-quality Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) to every 4-year-old in the state by 2023.
- Head Start will continue to act as a primary site—along with public schools and childcare providers—for our youngest learners to receive high-quality Pre-K through the initiative.
- As part of the initiative, Head Start's role in providing Pre-K will grow. Multiple sites will expand to full-day programs and add an additional 20 days to the school year.

What is Head Start?

Head Start offers preschool to low-income children. The program is free and available statewide. Rhode Island Head Start serves approximately 1,206 four- and five-year-olds.

What is the Governor's Pre-K Initiative?

Governor Gina Raimondo is committed to expanding Pre-K in Rhode Island so that high-quality, publicly funded Pre-K is available to every four-year-old in the state, regardless of zip code or socio-economic status.

How does Head Start support the Universal Pre-K Initiative?

Head Start in Rhode Island supports the initiative as a critical provider of early education to our youngest learners. Head Start works hand-in-hand with other state agencies and shares the state's commitment to providing high-quality Pre-K to all 4-year-olds through a mixed-delivery model that includes public schools and other childcare sites.



Why is Universal Pre-K so important?

Young brains are 90 percent developed by the age of 5. Early exposure to high-quality education like Pre-K is one of the best investments we can make in our children's futures. Research shows vast and lasting benefits to high-quality early education including significant boosts in emotional skills and gains in 3rd-grade reading proficiency—one of the most important predictors of high school graduation.

Children who go to high-quality preschool are more likely to graduate high school, more likely to get and keep a good job, and less likely to commit a crime. It's also a smart investment. Research shows that a \$1 investment in Pre-K returns anywhere from \$2 to \$17.

What do we mean by "high-quality"?

Research suggests that well-designed, high-quality Pre-K programs that prepare children for Kindergarten, elementary school, and beyond include the following characteristics.

- Teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree and receive specialized training and professional development in early childhood education
- Teacher-child ratios of at least 1:10 and class sizes of no more than 20
- Research-based curriculum aligned to K-12 standards
- At least 6 hours per day
- Engaged families
- A focus on the whole child, with wraparound supports to ensure the health and well-being of the child.

How do we know Rhode Island is a leader in delivering high-quality early education?

Rhode Island's Pre-K design has earned the program a quality rating of 10 out of 10 by the National Institute for Early Education Research, as well as recognition by *U.S. News and World Report* as the highest quality Pre-K program in the country.

What have we accomplished so far?

- Expanded all-day kindergarten to every district in the state, giving thousands of our littlest learners the right start in life
- Quadrupled the number of public Pre-K classes
- Added an additional 340 seats for the 2019-2020 school year, serving a total of 1,420 Rhode Island four-year-olds

What are our goals?

We are proud of our achievements. But we plan to do more. Rhode Islanders and our children deserve it.

Now	Goal
1,420 4-year-olds in Pre-K	7,000 4-year-olds in Pre-K
Serve 13 cities and towns	Serve all of Rhode Island
	Double the number of third graders reading at grade-level

Learn more about State Pre-K: <https://tinyurl.com/y3bymdns>

