

4-year old Prekindergarten Participation Rates in Selected States

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), a unit of Rutgers University, has published annual state prekindergarten reports since the 2001-2002 program year. For the State of Preschool 2013 report, Washington DC's prekindergarten program was reclassified as one entity. NIEER originally regarded Washington DC's program as either charter or public because there were different restrictions and standards for each program, but now they are considered to be one entity since both programs must follow the same requirements for funding.

In Table 1, the nine states (and Washington DC) have the highest percent of 4-year-olds enrolled in state prekindergarten in 2012-2013. Nationwide, only Florida and West Virginia offered a 4-year old universal prekindergarten program as defined by eligibility for all 4-year olds, no funding cap, and 100 percent district participation. The funding cap is defined as whether or not the state has a waiting list for students seeking enrollment. Each state's prekindergarten program may differ in terms of options for three-year olds, enrollment criteria beyond age requirements, funding, academic standards, district participation, and operating schedules.

Participation rates represent the number of 4-year-old enrollments divided by the US Census Bureau population estimate of 4-year-olds. Rates were calculated by NIEER for the school years 2008-09 through 2012-13, while the 2013-14 participation rates were calculated by dividing the state reported enrollments of 4-year olds by the 2013 US Census estimates of 4-year olds. Florida's 2013-14 4-year old participation rate was taken from the July 2014 Voluntary Prekindergarten Estimating Conference. Enrollment numbers for the 2013-2014 school year were gathered from each state. *The State of Preschool 2014* will be published in April 2015.

Major findings from State of Preschool 2013 report include:

1. An unchanged nationwide participation rate of 28% for 4-year olds.
2. The first observed decrease in estimated enrollments of 9,160 4-year olds since reporting began in 2001-2002.
3. Washington DC served the greatest percentage of 4-year olds followed by Florida, Oklahoma, and Vermont in 2012-13.
4. South Carolina fell out of the top ten to the eleventh spot with the addition of Washington DC.
5. Between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 program years, Iowa and Vermont had the greatest percentage increases in 4-year old participation rates (5 percentage points) by adding 3,045 and 249 students, respectively.
6. Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina had the greatest percentage decreases in their 4-year old participation rates (1 percentage point) with California having the greatest reduction in students, 14,392 during this time period.
7. In comparing West Virginia and Florida (the only universal programs), both states decreased in enrollments from 2012-13 to 2013-14. Comparisons to larger states such as California, New York, and Texas are less appropriate because they do not have universal prekindergarten programs as defined above.

Table 1. Top Ten States with the highest 4-year old Participation Rates in 2012-13 Program Year

Rank	State/ Program	Year Started	Funding Cap in PY 2012-13	Program Year Participation Rates						Enrollment	
				2013-14*	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09	2013-14*	2012-13
1	DC	2008	Yes	96%	94%	92%	90%	93%	72%	6,458	6,331
2	Florida**†	2005	No	77%	78%	79%	76%	73%	67%	170,828	174,145
3	Oklahoma†	1998	No	76%	74%	74%	73%	71%	71%	40,823	40,114
4	Vermont Act-62	2003	Yes	80%	71%	65%	67%	50%	53%	4,946	4,601
5	Wisconsin 4k	1984	No	69%	64%	63%	55%	51%	47%	48,590	46,321
6	West Virginia**	2002	No	64%	62%	61%	58%	55%	51%	13,070	13,394
7	Georgia†	1993	Yes	60%	58%	59%	59%	59%	53%	81,463	81,683
8	Iowa SVPP	2007	Yes	55%	52%*	51%	52%	35%	25%	21,926	21,429*
9	Texas	1985	No	52%	52%	51%	52%	50%	45%	203,648	205,056
10	New York	1998	Yes	45%	45%	44%	45%	47%	43%	102,114	100,247

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

*Data reported by state

**Universal prekindergarten program

†Only offers Prekindergarten for 4-year olds