

**Pre-K for All**

TEAM  
KENTUCKY



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**

# **Pre-K for All Findings and Recommendations**

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# Introduction



**Only 27%**

of Kentucky's 4-year-olds currently attend public Pre-K

## What is Pre-K for All?

Pre-K for All is an initiative to expand Kentucky's voluntary preschool program (Pre-K) to provide access and opportunity to every Kentucky 4-year-old. **Pre-K is preschool. And in Kentucky, preschool is not new.** Since 1991, and in every single budget the General Assembly has passed for over 3 decades, Kentucky has supported state-funded voluntary preschool — but only for *some* of our 4-year-olds. Today, only 27% of Kentucky 4-year-olds (about 14,200 out of 54,000) get to attend. **Pre-K for All is about giving more Kentucky kids the opportunity to go to preschool.**

## What is the Pre-K for All Advisory Committee?

On June 4, 2025, Governor Beshear issued Executive Order 2025-351, establishing the Pre-K for All Advisory Committee, **made up of experts and leaders in education, child care, workforce development, government, and business from across Kentucky. The Committee is bipartisan but its work is nonpartisan** — focusing on how expanding preschool can positively affect Kentucky's kids, families, and economy. The Advisory Committee has spent months listening to Kentuckians, speaking with experts, and reviewing leading practices from across the United States. **The voices heard throughout this process reflected a shared belief in the importance of preschool and excitement about the possibilities that Pre-K for All can unlock.**

**This Report is a response to those voices.**



**Kentucky has the opportunity,  
and the responsibility, to act.**  
**The time to invest in Pre-K for All is now.**

## What are the Advisory Committee's Recommendations?

The Advisory Committee's recommendations outline a **civic-driven, responsible approach to expanding preschool for all Kentucky 4-year-olds** in a way that reflects Kentucky's values and meets the needs of our communities. The Committee recommends expanding public preschool in a **phased, responsible way over several years** — ensuring local flexibility, providing services through **mixed and integrated district-level partnerships**, **emphasizing quality**, and **establishing a unified data system**.

A 2009 University of Kentucky study conservatively estimates that **expanding Pre-K results in a return of more than \$5 for every \$1 invested**.



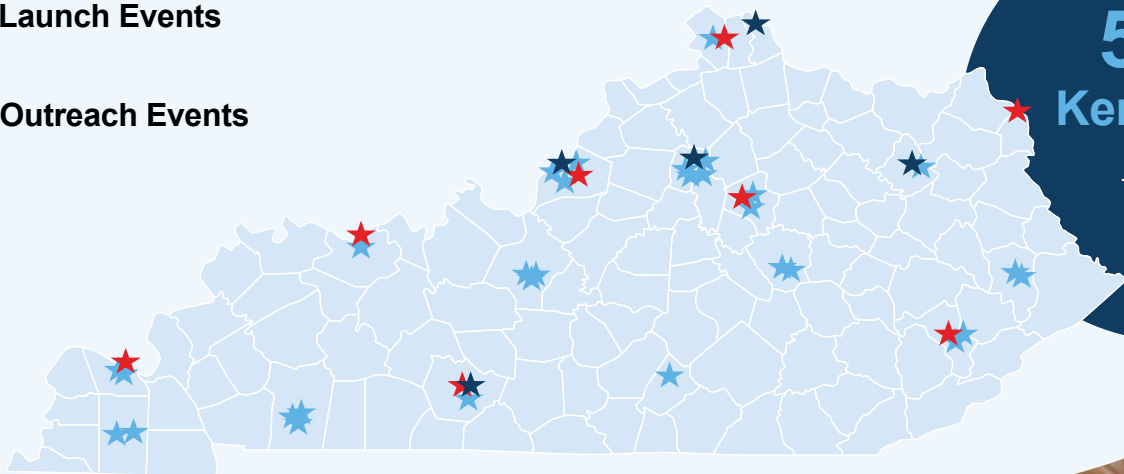
# Our Process: A Focus on Kentuckians and the Data

The Executive Order tasked the Committee to go about its work with a dual focus:

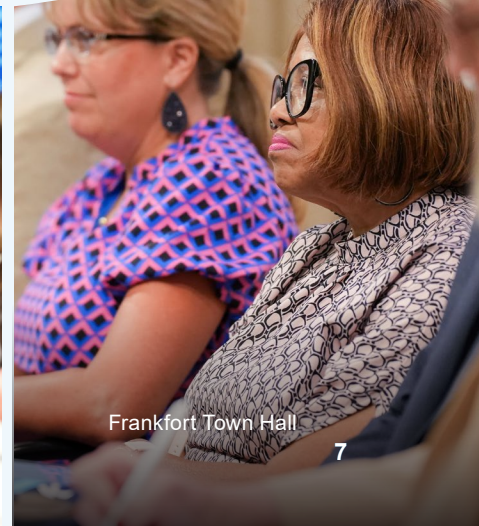
1. Why do Kentuckians need Pre-K?
2. What does the data say?

## Kentuckians spoke, the Committee listened.

- 5 Town Halls
- 8 Launch Events
- 52 Outreach Events



**500+**  
Kentuckians  
attended  
Town Halls



# Gathering Feedback from Kentuckians

## Launch Tour

Starting June 4, 2025, the Pre-K for All Team joined local officials, educators, business leaders, and parents to kick-off outreach efforts. From Paducah to Hazard, the Team heard thoughts about what expanding Pre-K access means for Kentucky's families and future.



Florence Launch Event



Northern Kentucky University Town Hall

## Town Halls

From June to August, the Committee held 5 Town Halls across the Commonwealth to listen to what folks had to say. Over 500 Kentucky parents, educators, legislators, local elected officials, child care providers, and business owners attended the Town Halls, sharing impactful stories, insights, and even recommendations with Committee Members.



Presenting to the KASS Board and answering questions from President-Elect Dr. Donald Shively, Paducah Independent Superintendent



Discussing Pre-K for All with Community Action Kentucky

## Outreach Events

The Pre-K for All Team held over 50 outreach events, speaking with Area Development Districts, Workforce Development Boards, education consortiums, and private regulated child care councils to present the data on Pre-K in Kentucky, provide information about the Pre-K for All initiative, and answer questions.

Audiences included the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS), Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA), Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA), Child Care Council of Kentucky, Kentucky Head Start Association, and Community Action Kentucky.



## Listening and Q&A Sessions

The Governor and the Pre-K for All Team hosted and participated in listening sessions with superintendents, school board members, private regulated child care providers, local elected officials, and others to ensure there is every opportunity for Kentuckians to be part of the process.



On August 8, 2025, the Pre-K for All Team brought child care providers from across the Commonwealth to the table to discuss how we all can work together to expand preschool access



On July 17, 2025, the Pre-K for All Team met with Community Action and Kentucky Head Start officials Rick Baker, Kaitlyn Miller, Catrena Bowman, and Sharon Price

## Meetings with Legislators

The Team met with dozens of state legislators of both parties, including members of legislative leadership, to provide information about Pre-K for All and discuss Pre-K expansion. It is clear we all share the goal of helping Kentuckians and their families succeed.



2025 Governor's Local Issues Conference



Meeting with Senator Brandon Smith (R), 30th District

# Why do Kentuckians Need Pre-K?

## Current Challenges



“

**I'm going to talk about blue-collar mama with one child....She's got [a] net income of about \$600 a week. She's paying \$150 a week for her child care....She's paying rent for \$1,200....And she has nothing left. [T]his is immoral[.]**

Mark Pogue, *Auto Dealer, Pogue Chevrolet GMC, Bowling Green Town Hall*



“

**I've had talented staff forced to leave the workforce, not because they wanted to, but because child care costs are simply too high. When families can't afford care, we lose good workers, our businesses suffer, and so does our state's economy.**

Dr. Sarah Moyer, *Chief Medical Officer, Humana Healthy Horizons, Louisville Town Hall*



“

**We know that these are children who are coming from hardworking families, and that so many of them, we are missing because they don't meet the criteria for the free programs that are available to families.**

Christina Sanders, *Assistant Director of Preschool, Warren County Schools, Bowling Green Town Hall*



“

**I would love to be in a situation where I could have another child, but I cannot afford it. My husband and I are both master's degree educated professionals....[I]f we had the opportunity to have preschool for all for our 4-year-old...we would save \$14,000 a year.**

Kaitlyn Miller, *Parent/School Counselor, Kenton County Schools, NKU Town Hall*



“

**As a former educator and as a workforce development professional now, it's a no-brainer to have Pre-K For All....[T]here have been thousands of jobs added across this state over the past few years. We need people to fill them....And the earlier we can start, the better it'll be for all of Kentucky. Education is the solution to most issues that we face.**

Justin Suttles, *Director, TENCO Workforce Development Board, Morehead Town Hall*



# Why do Kentuckians Need Pre-K?

## Benefits of Pre-K



“

**We will never, ever have surplus of nurses. And I know some of those single parent mothers would be able to go to school if their children were able to go to preschool.**

*LaDonna Rogers, VP of Human Resources, TJ Regional Health, Bowling Green Town Hall*



“

**When we invest in Pre-K for All, we're not just prepping our children for Kindergarten....We're giving families a real opportunity to break cycles of poverty, achieve self-sufficiency, and pursue futures they imagine for themselves and their children.**

*Kristie Adams, Chief Learning Officer, Family Scholar House, Louisville Town Hall*



“

**[I]f you've ever been to Robertson County, we have zero [child care providers]....I'm not going to tell nobody's kids they couldn't come....I definitely support this initiative.**

*Sanford Holbrook, Superintendent of Robertson County Schools, Morehead Town Hall*



“

**Why on earth wouldn't we, as Kentuckians, want to give our students a head start so that when they do get into Kindergarten, they're well ahead of the game?**

*Mark Kopp, Superintendent of Franklin County Schools, Frankfort Town Hall*



“

**I'll tell you my son's story....my son still wasn't speaking by the time he was about 3 years and 3 months old....And we got him into preschool that year...he did a year-and-a-half in preschool. By the time he was in Kindergarten — he's...talking, playing with other kids....And preschool really — it gave my son his first words.**

*Mark Watkins, Parent, Frankfort Town Hall*



# What Does the Data Say?



**The Committee heard from experts, learned from other states, and reviewed studies.**

## Pre-K for All Advisory Committee Meetings

The Committee held public meetings to hear from experts and review data. Here's what the Committee looked at.

### Early Childhood Education in Kentucky: State of the Commonwealth

The Committee reviewed the state of Early Childhood Education in Kentucky. It examined the policy landscape from the establishment of state-funded Pre-K in 1990 through 3 decades of continued commitment to state-funded preschool. The Committee, however, did not review state-funded preschool in isolation. Members studied Kindergarten readiness and child care availability and explored the current state of eligibility and cost in public Pre-K and partner programs like Head Start and private child care.



### Other States: Lessons Learned

The Committee also reviewed early childhood education in other states. 19 States and the District of Columbia (D.C.) provide preschool programs for all 4-year-olds with no eligibility requirements to attend other than age. The Committee focused on 5 states with strong outcomes that share similar demographic, economic, or policy environments with Kentucky: Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.



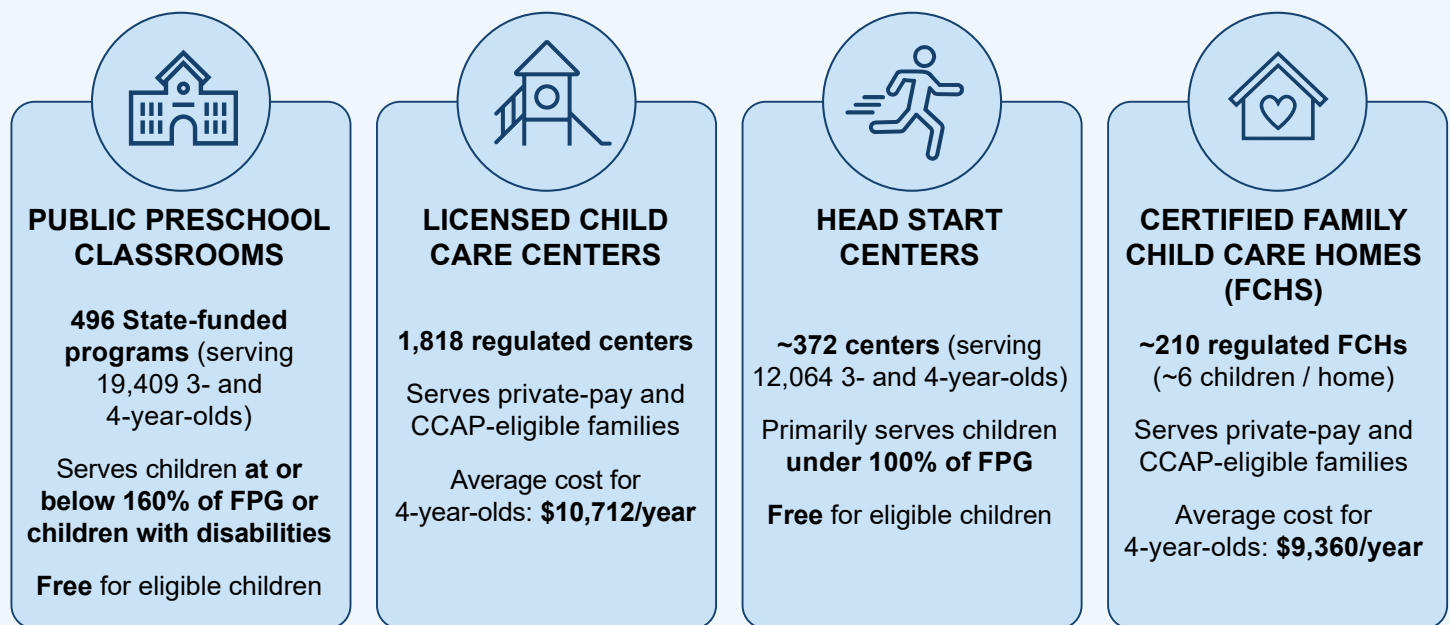
# What is the Current State of the Commonwealth?

## Kentucky's Early Childhood Settings

In Kentucky, there are currently 4 primary formal early childhood settings:

- **Public Preschool Classrooms:** Voluntary, state-funded preschool classrooms operated by school districts that serve 4-year-olds from families with incomes up to 160% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, as well as 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities regardless of income.
- **Licensed Child Care Centers:** Privately-run centers licensed by the Commonwealth that may be for-profit or nonprofit (e.g., faith-based, community centers).
- **Head Start Centers:** Federally-funded programs that provide comprehensive early learning services (education, health, nutrition and family support) to low-income children ages 3 to 5.
- **Certified Family Child Care Homes:** Home-based child care settings operated by individuals who have received state certification.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Kentucky's Formal Early Childhood Settings**



Outside of these formal settings, Kentucky families may rely on “informal,” or unregulated, care. This includes child care provided by stay-at-home parents, extended family members, babysitters, or informal home-based co-ops. These options are often used out of preference or necessity, particularly in communities where child care seats are limited. Many families make difficult decisions such as leaving the workforce because the cost of formal care is prohibitively high. For purposes of this Report, these options are not considered “formal” because they are not required by law to meet the health and safety standards, background check requirements, curriculum guidelines, and other regulatory safeguards that our formal early childhood settings are required to follow.

## Kentucky's Publicly-Funded Early Childhood Programs

Kentucky's main publicly-funded early childhood programs are public preschool, Head Start, and CCAP. All 3 of these programs are designed to serve different at-risk populations, with eligibility for each primarily based on household income. Each program operates under separate and distinct rules, meaning access varies widely across families.

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**Public Preschool:** Primarily services 4-year-olds from low-income households or children ages 3 and 4 with developmental delays or disabilities. By regulation, programs must operate for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day, though individual school districts may extend the schedule depending on local resources. When the General Assembly initially passed the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), children qualified to attend preschool if they were 4-years-old and qualified for the federal free lunch program or were 3- or 4-years-old with a disability. Importantly, when establishing public preschool, the General Assembly did not intend to replace Head Start programs. In fact, KRS 157.3175 specifically requires local Head Start directors to certify that their Head Start program is “fully utilized.” For the 2024-2025 school year, Public Preschool enrollment stood at 19,409 children (14,224 4-year-olds and 5,185 3-year-olds).

Public Preschool is primarily funded through the Kentucky State General Fund. The Kentucky General Assembly allocates funding to the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) on a biennial basis during the budget session. KDE then distributes these funds to local school districts on an annual basis, using a non-competitive grant allocation process.

The General Assembly appropriated \$18 million for public preschool in 1991 and increased that appropriation to \$36 million the following year.

In 2007, the General Assembly appropriated over \$75 million for public preschool and also increased the eligibility for 4-year-olds from low-income households from 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines to 150%. In 2016, the General Assembly appropriated \$90.1 million for public preschool and also attempted to expand preschool by raising the income-based eligibility threshold for 4-year-olds to 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. However, due to a line-item veto, that expansion did not occur. Today, the income eligibility requirement sits at 160% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. For the 2024-2026 fiscal years, the General Assembly appropriated \$84,481,100 per year for public preschool, which is the same amount allocated each fiscal year since 2019.

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**Head Start:** A federally funded program that enrolled 12,064 of Kentucky's 3-and 4-year-olds in 2024. Head Start offers both full-day (6 hours) and half-day (3.5 hours) models in Head Start centers, along with additional support for children with disabilities. Head Start receives its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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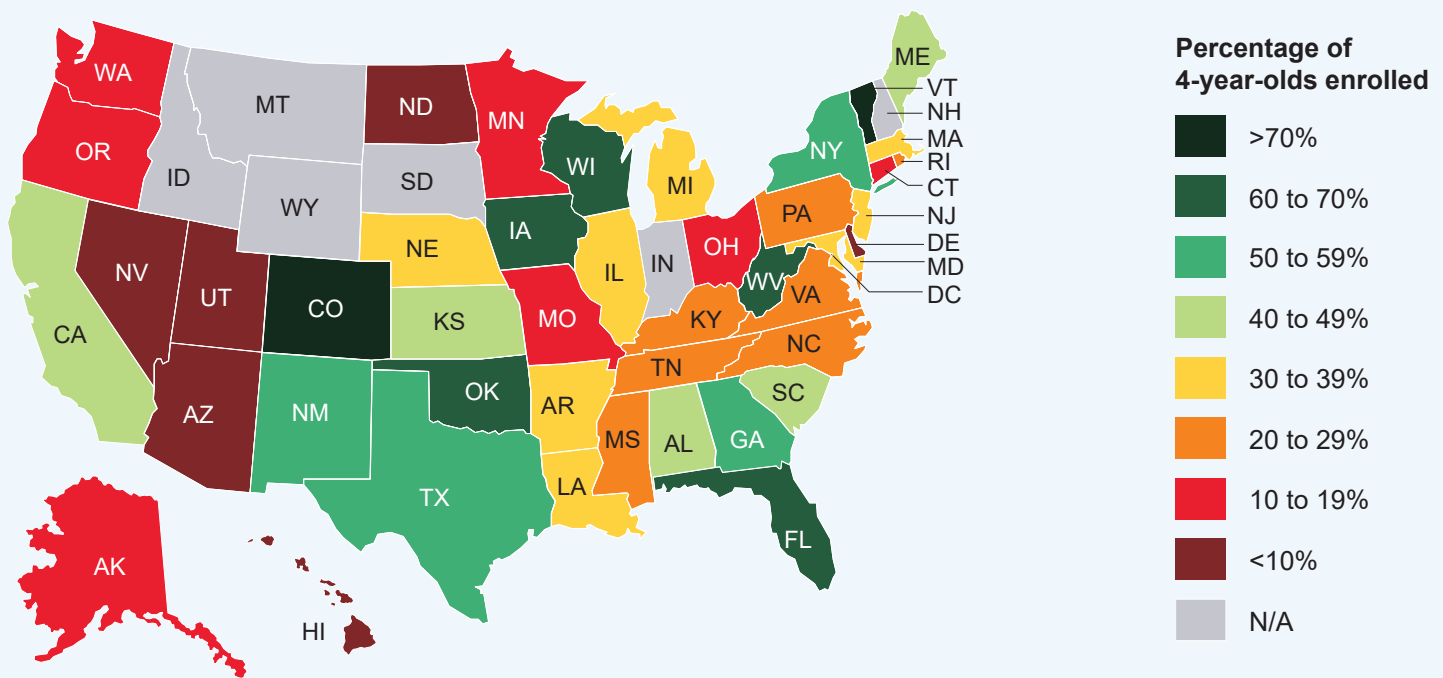
### **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):**

A federal and state partnership program used to provide financial assistance to low-income families so they can work or attend an educational program. CCAP subsidizes access to regulated child care centers and family child care homes for families who meet income and employment-related eligibility criteria. 39,849 children are currently served through CCAP — nearly 10,347 of which are 4-year-olds. Families make co-payments based on household income and size and services can range from part-time to full-day child care. CCAP is primarily funded through a federal block grant, and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) oversees CCAP in Kentucky and makes direct payments to child care providers on behalf of eligible families enrolled in the program.



# Challenges of the Current System

**FIGURE 2**  
**State-Funded Pre-K Program Enrollment (SY 2023-24)**



**FIGURE 3**  
**Challenges of the Current System**

Public Preschool is not Accessible	Child Care is not Accessible	Child Care is not Affordable	Kids are not Kindergarten-ready
<p><b>Only 27%</b></p> <p>of Kentucky's 54,000 4-year-olds (14,200) are served by public preschool.</p>	<p><b>49/120</b></p> <p>of Kentucky counties are designated child care deserts.</p>	<p><b>13%</b></p> <p>of Kentucky families' median household income is consumed by the cost of child care.</p>	<p><b>Only 48%</b></p> <p>of Kentucky kids are Kindergarten-ready when they arrive to their first day of Kindergarten.</p>

# What Lessons did the Committee Learn from Other States?

## Alabama

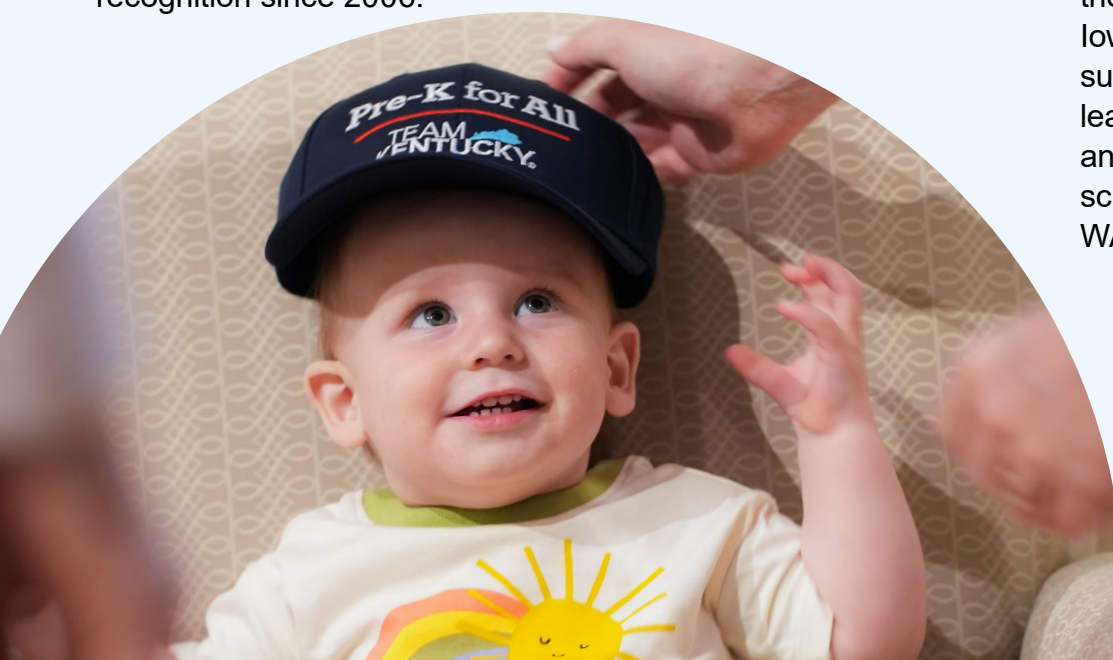
Alabama's First Class Pre-K (FCPK) started as a pilot program in 2000 and gradually expanded over the years. FCPK operates for 6.5 hours a day during the workweek and is provided in a variety of settings including public schools, private child care, Head Start, colleges, and other community-based partners. The Office of School Readiness (OSR) funds classrooms through a competitive process, and funding is contingent on adherence to FCPK Guidelines. FCPK has strong systems for data and accountability, along with robust administrative and workforce supports. Today, FCPK is viewed as one of the most successful programs in the United States — its high quality has gained national recognition since 2006.

## Georgia

Georgia's Pre-K Program piloted in 1992 and expanded in 1995 to become the nation's first preschool program for all 4-year-olds. Georgia's Pre-K operates for 6.5 hours a day, 5 days a week, and is provided through public schools, Head Start, faith-based organizations, private child care centers, and more. All providers apply directly to the Department for Early Care and Learning (DECAL) for funding, which DECAL then distributes directly to them through competitive grant agreements. Funding is contingent on adherence to program guidelines. Georgia's data system is strong and can connect data across state agencies and track long-term student outcomes.

## Iowa

Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) began in 2007. The program provides at least 10 hours of services a week, but public schools subcontract with nonpublic providers such as Head Start and private child care which may provide additional coverage. Only public school districts are eligible to apply for and receive SWVPP funding directly from the Iowa Department of Education. Funding amounts are determined through a points-based application process, with points awarded according to information submitted by each district. While SWVPP follows the state funding formula, 4-year-olds are funded at 50% of the K-12 state aid amount. For the early childhood workforce, Iowa offers multiple state-supported pathways to meet lead educator requirements and also offers the TEACH scholarship program and WAGE\$ compensation program.





## Oklahoma

Oklahoma's Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program (Oklahoma Pre-K) launched in 1998, making it the second state-funded preschool program for all 4-year-olds in the country. The state funds Pre-K as an extension of its K-12 system and requires salary and schedule parity for lead program teachers in public settings only. While the program only operates for 2.5 hours a day and is mostly delivered in public settings, school districts may subcontract with local child care centers, Head Start, and other community-based programs.



## West Virginia

Legislation passed in 2002 that required West Virginia Pre-K (WV Pre-K) to be available to all 4-year-olds by 2012. Today, after scaling over a decade, 67% of the state's 4-year-olds are enrolled in the full-day program. WV Pre-K is a statewide partnership between public schools and community programs like private child care and Head Start — at least half of classrooms per county must operate through these partnerships, which are formalized in contracts ensuring quality and accountability. In the 2023-2024 school year, the collaboration rate reached 83%. Oversight comes from local county core teams — representing public schools, special education, regulated child care, and Head Start agencies — supported at the state level by the Pre-K Steering Team comprised of a state Pre-K Coordinator, special education representative, Department of Health and Human Resources Senior Specialist, and Head Start Collaboration Director.





# The Research: Impact of Expanding Pre-K



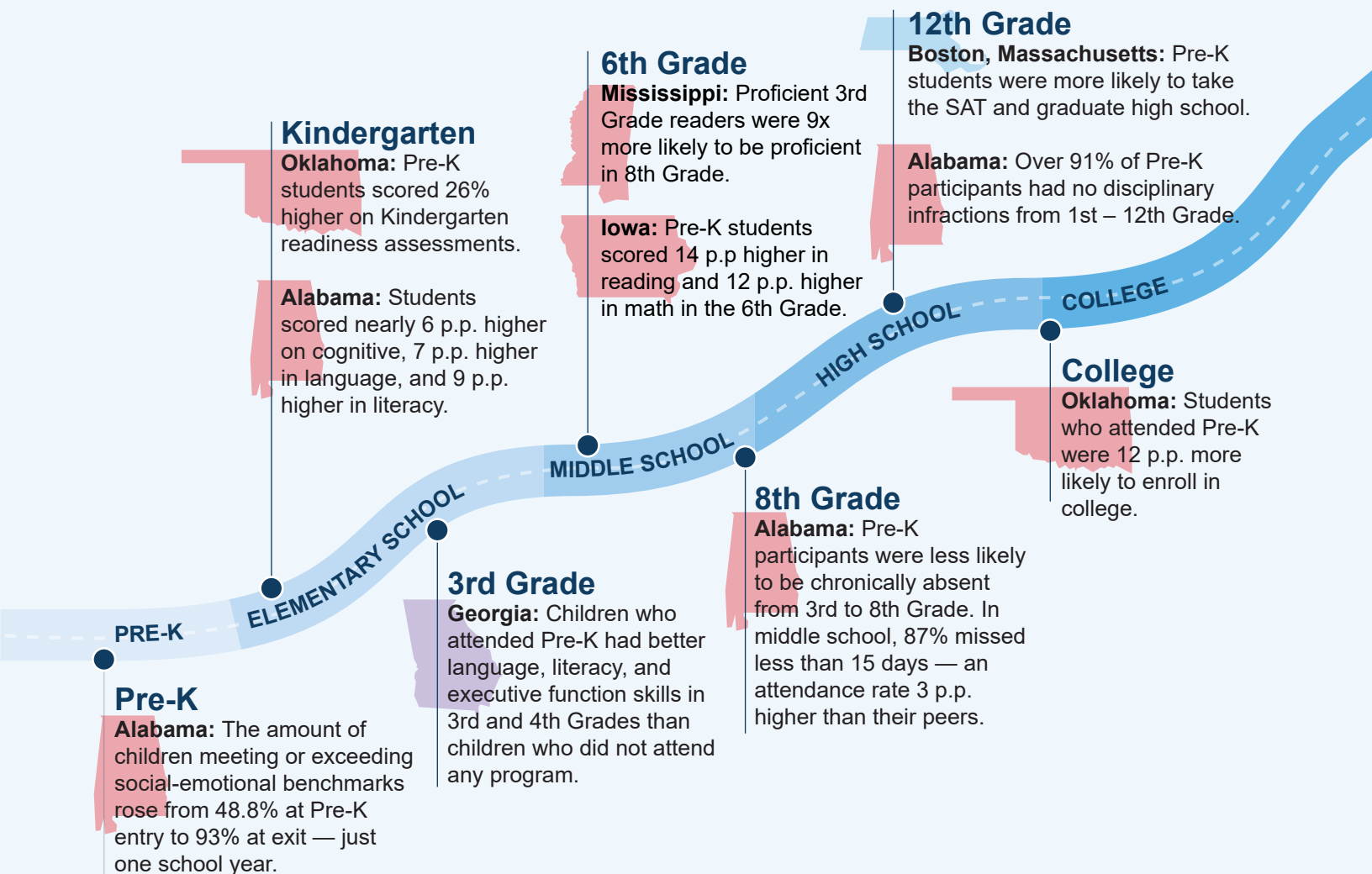
# The Research: Impact of Expanding Pre-K

**For Our Kids, Pre-K provides immediate and lasting benefits.** Decades of research show that kids who attend high-quality preschool programs are better prepared for Kindergarten, have stronger literacy skills, are more likely to graduate high school, and are more likely to go to college. Kids are also less likely to have disciplinary issues or be chronically absent throughout their school journey.

**For Our Families, Pre-K creates economic opportunity.** Pre-K for All reduces child care costs and helps parents and caregivers return to work or pursue education and job training. In fact, studies show parents with kids in Pre-K make

nearly \$9,000 more a year for 6 consecutive years. Even the Wall Street Journal recently reported that parents of children in preschool are more likely to return to work, less likely to need a second job, and less likely to job-hop.

**For Our Communities, Pre-K delivers a strong return on investment.** Pre-K is good business. Studies estimate that investing \$1 in Pre-K for All returns \$10 in public benefits. With Pre-K for All, up to 70,000 Kentuckians could enter the workforce — closing labor gaps, raising family incomes, and fueling our economy. Studies show that high-quality preschool positively impacts communities across generations.



# Positive Impact on Children

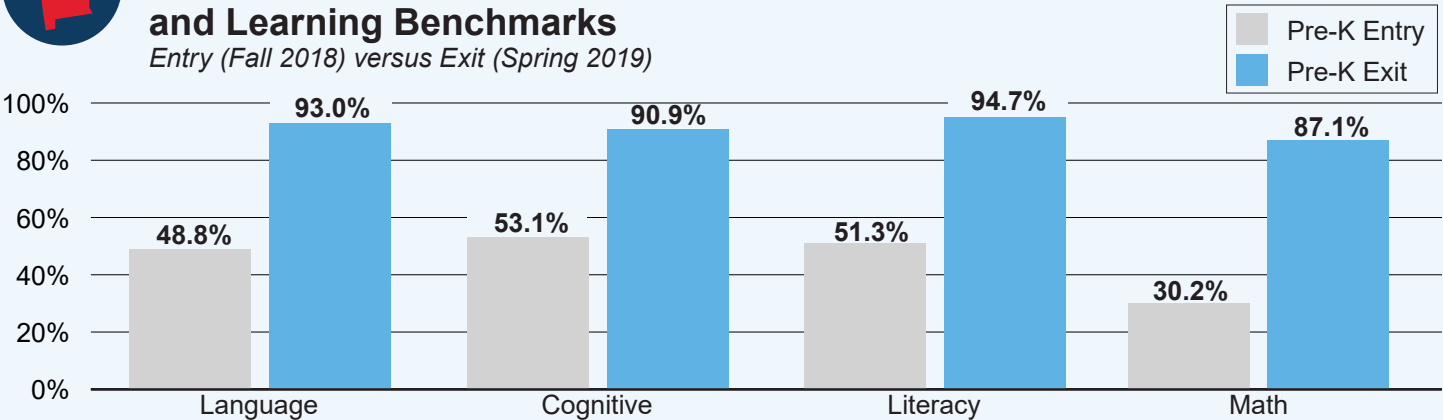
**High-quality Pre-K programs deliver immediate and lasting benefits for children’s academic and social development.** Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program illustrates this impact clearly. When children entered Pre-K, fewer than half met widely held expectations for development and learning. By the end of the year, nearly all were meeting or exceeding expectations. Gains were substantial across every domain: social-emotional readiness rose from 49% to 93%, language skills jumped from 53% to 91%, and literacy soared from 51% to 95%. Even in math, where only 30% met expectations at entry,

87% did so by exit. These results underscore high-quality Pre-K’s effectiveness in preparing children for the academic and social demands of Kindergarten (Figure 4).

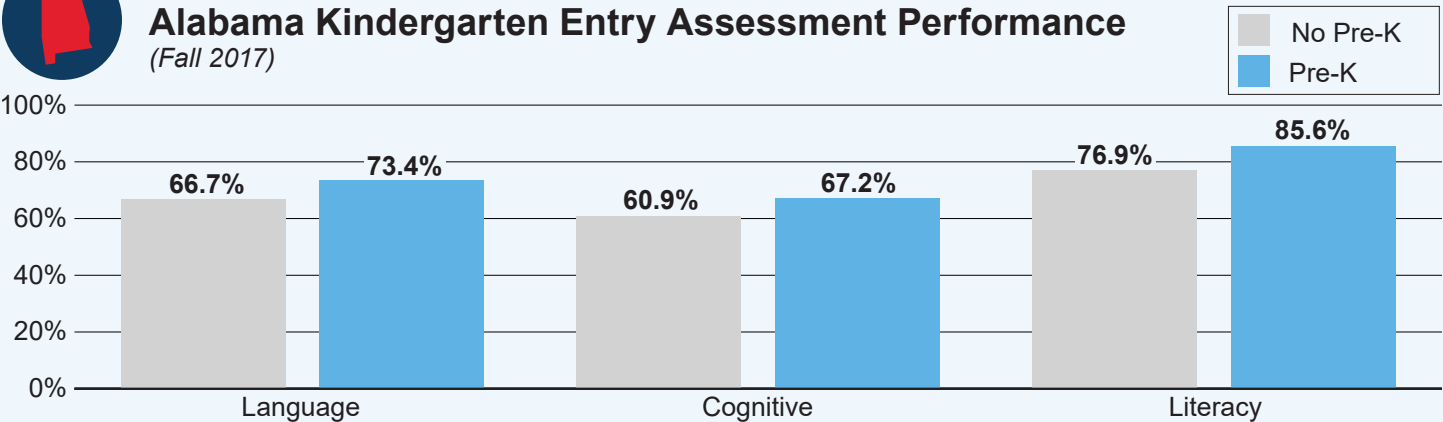
**These early gains translate into stronger starts in elementary school.** Research from Alabama and Oklahoma shows that children who attended Pre-K scored significantly higher on Kindergarten readiness assessments than their peers. In Alabama, students scored nearly 6 percentage points (p.p.) higher on cognitive skills, 7 p.p. higher in language, and 9 p.p. higher in literacy (Figure 5).



**FIGURE 4**  
**Alabama Children Meeting or Exceeding Development and Learning Benchmarks**  
*Entry (Fall 2018) versus Exit (Spring 2019)*



**FIGURE 5**  
**Alabama Kindergarten Entry Assessment Performance**  
*(Fall 2017)*





In Oklahoma, low-income children who attended Pre-K scored 26% higher on early academic readiness assessments, with the largest gains in cognitive and language skills. Pre-K gives children — especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds — the foundation they need to succeed.

### The benefits persist well beyond

**Kindergarten.** A long-term study of Georgia's Pre-K program found that by 3rd Grade, children who attended Pre-K scored higher in language and literacy than peers who did not, with strong gains in phonological awareness — a critical skill for learning to read. Mississippi researchers found similar results: children who attended Pre-K were 1.5 times more likely to be proficient in 3rd Grade reading, and those early gains compounded over time. Students proficient in 3rd Grade were 9 times more likely to remain proficient by 8th Grade, a key predictor of high school graduation.

**Academic advantages of Pre-K also extend into middle and high school.** In Iowa, Pre-K students scored 14 p.p. higher in reading and 12 p.p. higher in math by 6th Grade. Research

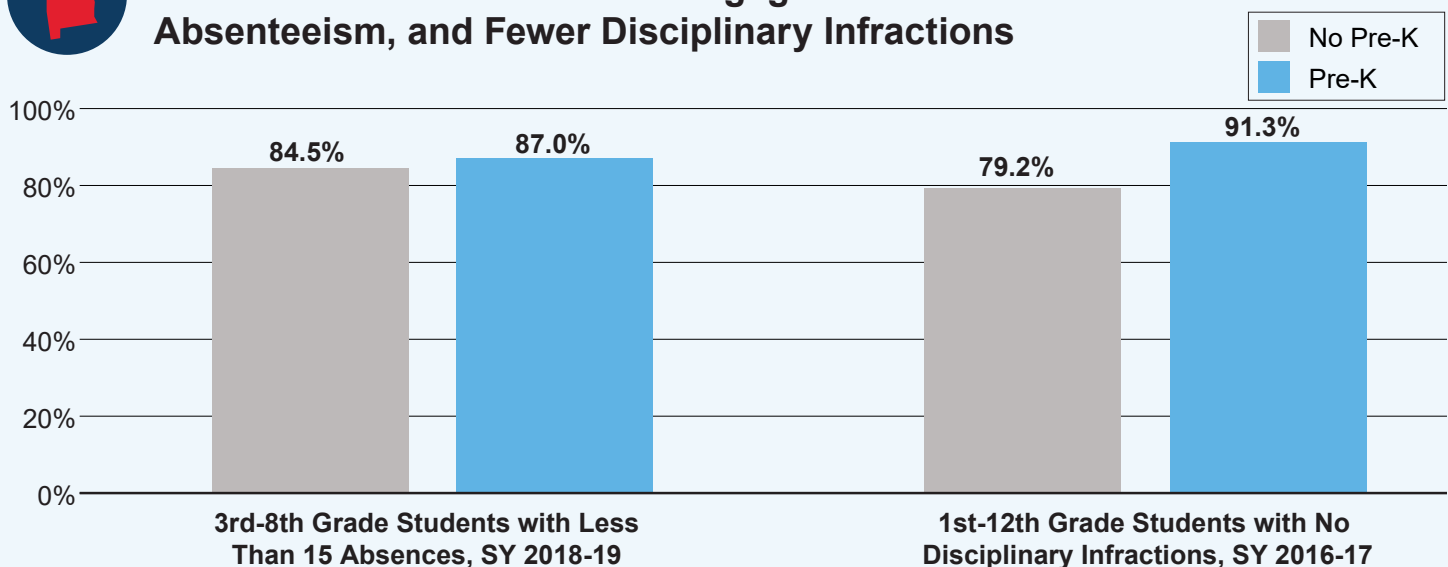
has also found that Pre-K leads to significant gains in school engagement. Alabama data show that from 3rd through 8th Grade, 87% of Pre-K participants missed fewer than 15 days of school each year — 2.5 p.p. higher than their peers. From first through 12th Grade, over 91% of Pre-K participants had no disciplinary infractions, a rate more than 12 p.p. higher than non-participants (Figure 6). These findings suggest that early education not only supports academic growth but also fosters habits and behaviors that contribute to long-term success in school.

**The impact continues into college.** A study of Boston's Pre-K program found that attending Pre-K increased the likelihood of graduating high school by 6 p.p. and boosted college attendance and SAT test-taking. In Oklahoma, students who attended Pre-K were 12 p.p. more likely to enroll in a 2- or 4-year college than those who did not. These findings confirm what decades of research have shown: investing in Pre-K for All is one of the most effective strategies for improving educational outcomes and creating pathways to lifelong success.



FIGURE 6

### Pre-K Drives Positive School Engagement: Reduced Absenteeism, and Fewer Disciplinary Infractions



# Positive Impact on Families

**Pre-K delivers a dual benefit for families:** it boosts income while lowering household costs. A national study found that expanding access to early care and education across the U.S. directly boosts workforce participation, particularly among mothers.

**Beyond national studies, program-specific studies reinforce this link between Pre-K access and stronger family earnings.** A recent working paper by researchers at Yale and Brown University examined how Pre-K for All programs can affect family financial stability, focusing on lower-income families in New Haven, Connecticut. The findings are striking: during the Pre-K years, parents with enrolled children experienced a 22% increase in earnings. Gains

continued over time: 6 years after Pre-K, families who participated earned 18% more than those who did not (Figure 7).

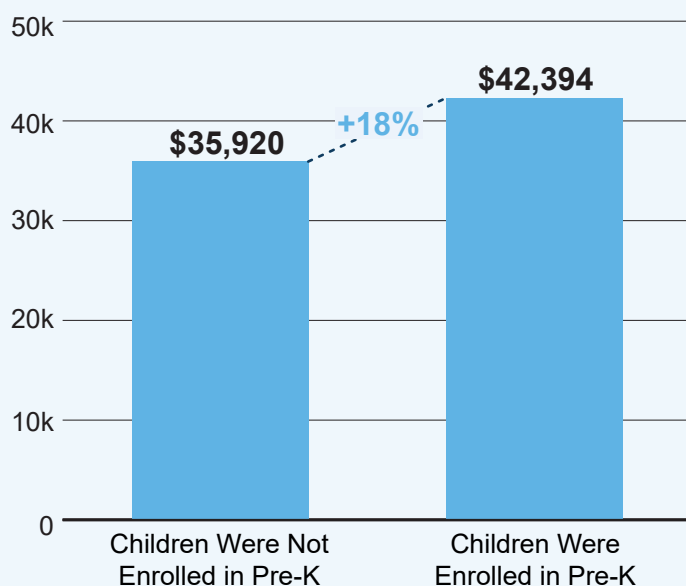
**Together with increased earnings, the financial relief from reduced child care costs provides families with a powerful double benefit.** Like Kentucky, dual-income families in Colorado spend an average of 10% of their median household income on child care for one 4-year-old. According to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, their expanded Pre-K program — which is only half-day — has saved families roughly \$6,000 in child care costs per year.



FIGURE 7

## Increase in Parental Earnings if Children are in Pre-K

*Parent Earnings Six (6) Years after Pre-K*



# Positive Impact on Communities

**Research shows that investments in early education provide strong long-term benefits for communities.** The recent working paper by researchers at Yale and Brown University examined not only the family-level effects of Pre-K but also its broader economic and social return on investment. **The study found that every \$1 invested yields over \$10 in public benefits.** These gains come from increased parental workforce participation and earnings, reduced reliance on social services, and long-term benefits for children such as higher future earnings, greater tax contributions, and lower arrest rates.

**The societal impact is also evident in long-term life outcomes for Pre-K participants.** A 25-year study of Chicago's Child-Parent Center program found that Pre-K participants were more likely to have health insurance and less likely to face negative outcomes such as arrest or substance abuse (Figure 8). Other studies have shown increased likelihood of home ownership among Pre-K participants. These differences reflect reduced reliance on public systems such as healthcare, criminal justice, and substance abuse treatment, demonstrating how **Pre-K can generate lasting benefits for both individuals and society.**



FIGURE 8

## Outcomes of Preschool Participants vs. Nonparticipants

*Difference between Pre-K Participants and Nonparticipants*

**12.0 p.p.**

**Higher likelihood of health insurance**

**6.4 p.p.**

**Lower likelihood of arrest**

**5.2 p.p.**

**Lower likelihood of drug abuse**

**Children who attend high-quality Pre-K programs...have 56% fewer instances of special education placement, about 28% higher rates of high school graduation, about 36% fewer arrests once they get to be adults. They earn more money, too — if you're more likely to graduate school, more likely to graduate college, less likely to be incarcerated — you're probably going to earn more money....In terms of greater home ownership — 36% for those who went to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs versus 13% for those who didn't.**

Walter S. Gilliam, Ph.D., *Executive Director, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska*



# Findings and Recommendations



# Findings

The Committee traveled the Commonwealth, heard from Kentuckians, and looked at the data. **Here is what the Committee found.**



## 1 Kentucky's early care system is fragmented.

Kentucky delivers early care and education through a patchwork of programs with inconsistent eligibility rules, funding sources, affordability, and access — creating gaps that affect families across the state.

## 2 Kentucky's existing system is inadequate.

Child care is often unaffordable and inaccessible — not all kids get to attend, forcing parents out of the workforce and leaving half of kids unprepared for Kindergarten.

## 3 Pre-K for All is achievable.

Several states have successfully expanded access to preschool for all 4-year-olds — proving that Pre-K for All is not only possible, but already working.

## 4 Successful Pre-K for All programs focus on quality.

Successful state programs prioritize quality, offer flexible mixed delivery, and use strong data systems to improve outcomes and guide decisions.

## 5 Pre-K pays off for kids, families, and communities.

High-quality Pre-K boosts Kindergarten readiness, strengthens long-term academic success, lowers child care costs, and delivers strong economic returns.

# Recommendations

The Committee has identified 7 key recommendations.

## 1. Kentucky should expand its existing, state-funded public preschool program now.

**The need is urgent.** Right now, we are failing our kids. Tens of thousands of Kentucky's 4-year-olds are not enrolled in any public or private program before Kindergarten. Kids that do not attend any Pre-K are significantly less ready than those who have access to preschool. Today, 52% of our Kindergarteners are arriving to school unprepared and only 47% of our 3rd Graders are proficient in reading. Research consistently shows that Pre-K prepares children for school, helps working families and caregivers, and provides long-term economic benefits for communities.

## 2. Kentucky should expand public preschool in a phased, responsible way over several years.

**Phased growth is smart growth.** States like Alabama, West Virginia, and Oklahoma show that Pre-K expansion is successful and sustainable when it happens over time. Kentucky has already expanded Pre-K on 2 previous occasions. Expanding in a phased, responsible way over several years will ensure more kids have access, and more parents can return to work, while providing school districts with the flexibility to expand when they are truly ready.

## 3. Kentucky should ensure local flexibility in preschool expansion.

**No two school districts or counties are the same.** Preschool expansion should be responsive to local community needs, and school districts should have the flexibility to expand when they are truly ready. School districts should maintain control of preschool expansion in their communities and should be given the flexibility to make decisions on when that expansion occurs.

## 4. Kentucky should provide services through mixed and integrated school district-level partnerships with Head Start, Private Regulated Child Care, and other community-based providers.

**Kentucky's existing early childhood education system is fragmented in terms of regulation, alignment, and availability.** Using our existing infrastructure, ensuring full utilization of federal funds, to deliver Pre-K will better unify our system, increase capacity, and use our state and federal dollars most effectively.



# Recommendations (Cont.)

## **5. Kentucky should prioritize quality and flexibility in implementation.**

**Quality is important, and Kentuckians deserve the best.** States like Alabama show that uniform quality standards lead to continuous improvement, strong data collection, and accountability monitoring, ensuring high quality for all provider types.

## **6. Kentucky should establish regulatory flexibility for Pre-K providers.**

**Kentucky can help districts and providers become expansion-ready by allowing more options for meeting regulatory requirements.** The General Assembly should authorize the Kentucky Department of Education to establish administrative regulations with a focus on district local flexibility for facilities, transportation, and educator requirements. This flexibility should include application-based waivers for specific regulatory requirements.

## **7. Kentucky should establish a unified data system for agency partners and track educational and workforce success data.**

**Taxpayers deserve to know their dollars are making a difference.** Kentuckians deserve a transparent, responsive, effective, and accountable Pre-K system. Right now, there are data gaps. Kentucky should invest in a single, coordinated data system to track enrollment, quality, and outcomes across all Pre-K providers, while maintaining privacy of families and children. This will help monitor progress, guide continuous improvement, and inform decision-making, and will tell families, educators, policymakers, and the General Assembly what is working and where resources are needed.



# Support for Pre-K for All



# Support from Local Elected Officials

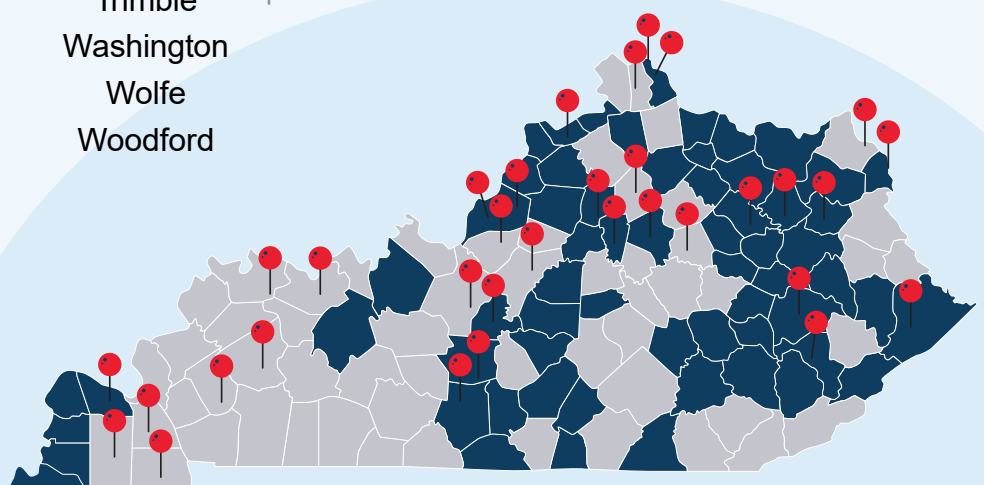
Elected officials from communities across the Commonwealth have voiced strong support for Pre-K for All. This includes 63 County Judge/Executives and 33 Mayors, showing widespread support.

## County Judge/Executives

Adair	Fulton	Metcalf
Anderson	Gallatin	Monroe
Ballard	Grant	Montgomery
Barren	Harrison	Morgan
Bath	Hart	Nicholas
Boyd	Henry	Ohio
Boyle	Hickman	Oldham
Bracken	Jackson	Owsley
Breathitt	Jefferson	Perry
Breckinridge	LaRue	Pike
Campbell	Laurel	Powell
Carlisle	Lee	Robertson
Carroll	Leslie	Rockcastle
Carter	Letcher	Rowan
Clay	Lewis	Russell
Clinton	Magoffin	Shelby
Elliott	Marion	Taylor
Fayette	Mason	Trimble
Fleming	McCracken	Washington
Floyd	McCreary	Wolfe
Franklin	Menifee	Woodford

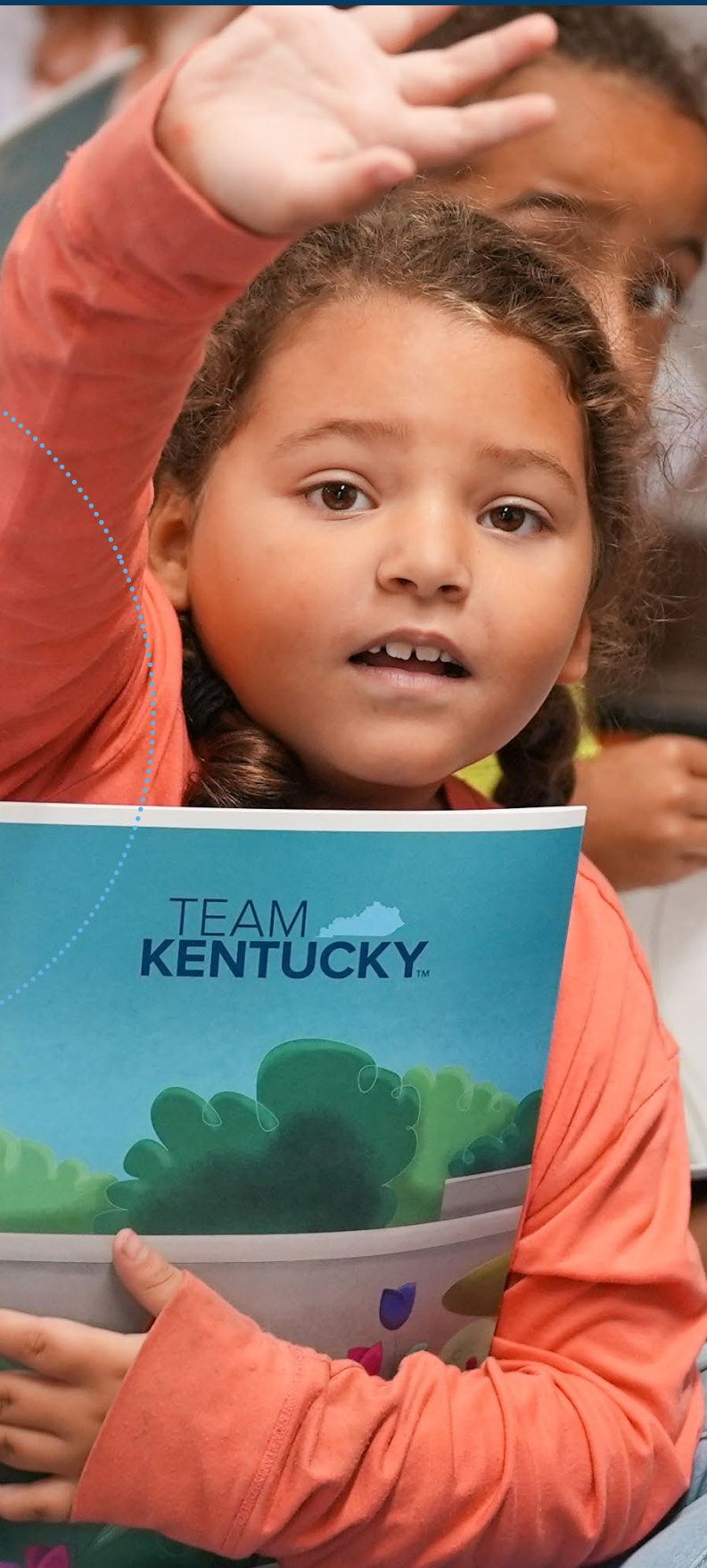
## Mayors

Ashland	Louisville
Bardstown	Mayfield
Bellevue	Morehead
Benton	Murray
Carrollton	Newport
Cave City	Owensboro
Crestview Hills	Owingsville
Earlington	Paducah
Elizabethtown	Pikeville
Frankfort	Princeton
Georgetown	Robards
Hazard	Sandy Hook
Hillview	Shively
Hodgenville	Versailles
Horse Cave	Winchester
Jackson	Worthington
Lexington	





## Support from Educators



### Survey Results from the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS)

The Kentucky Association of School Superintendents voted at their Fall Summit to endorse Pre-K for All.

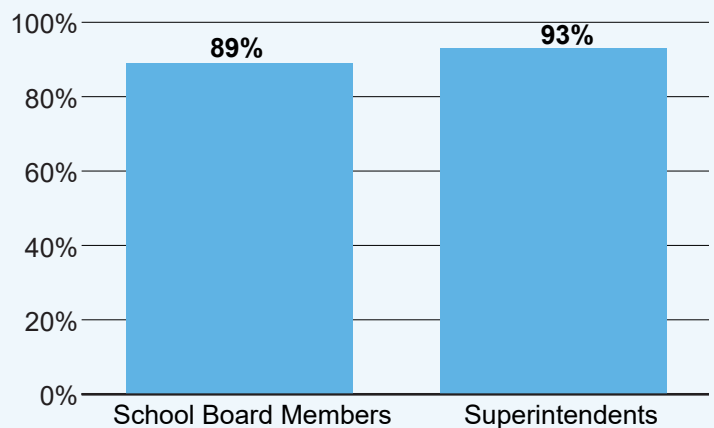
# 95%

said yes to supporting  
expanding Pre-K access to all  
Kentucky 4-year-olds

### Survey Results from the Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA)

A survey of the Kentucky School Boards Association also showed very strong support for Pre-K for All.

**FIGURE 9**  
**Percent of Kentucky School Boards Association Respondents answering “yes:” Do you support expanding Pre-K access to all Kentucky 4-year-olds?**



# Support from the Community

## Support from Town Hall Attendees

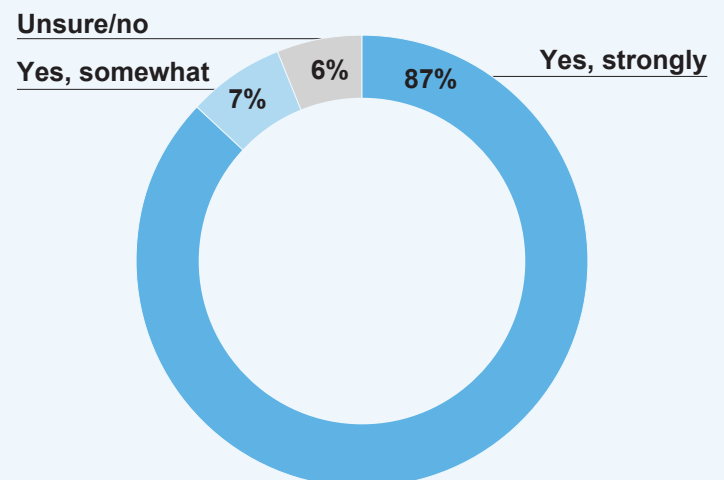
At each Town Hall, participants were invited to complete an anonymous poll to share their perspectives on the expansion of Pre-K access to all 4-year-old children in Kentucky. Across all respondents, the most striking finding from the survey is the overwhelming support for greater Commonwealth investment in Pre-K. **94% of respondents said they support more Commonwealth funding for Pre-K in Kentucky.** This level of consensus sends a clear message: Kentuckians are ready for the Commonwealth to take action to expand and sustain high-quality early learning opportunities.

## Support from Legislators

Over 25 legislators from both the House and Senate have shared statements of support for Pre-K for All, describing it as one of the smartest investments Kentucky can make for its future. They emphasized that early childhood education helps every child start school ready to succeed, regardless of family income or ZIP code, while strengthening academic outcomes, closing achievement gaps, and building a stronger workforce. Legislators also noted that Pre-K supports working families and local economies, pointing to research that shows how investing early improves graduation rates, reduces crime, and drives long-term economic growth. Across the board, lawmakers framed Pre-K for All as a sound economic strategy that benefits children, families, and communities statewide.



**FIGURE 10**  
**Town Hall Poll Respondents, “Would you support more state funding for Pre-K in Kentucky?”**



# Statements of Support



“

**When asked about the critical barriers to employment, the two resounding responses of all employers were transportation and child care....This Pre-K for All initiative would finally address those concerns.**

*Candace McGraw, Former CEO of CVG Airport and Former Board Chair of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce*



“

**The research is clear, supporting Pre-K for All is the best investment we can make as a Commonwealth. Any investment in our future should begin with an investment in education for the youngest learners and their families. High-quality early learning experiences and safe and engaging environments are the formula for success for Kindergarten preparation. This non-partisan issue should be prioritized for all of Kentucky's children and families.”**

*Dr. Annette Bridges, Director of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Simmons College of Kentucky*



“

**Naturally, I'm supportive of Pre-K for All....Pre-K for all students would enhance our youths' learning, positively impact their life's trajectory while also greatly benefiting our rural local economies by ensuring parents have opportunities in office.**

*Owen McNeill, Mason County Judge/Executive*



“

**I write in strong support of Kentucky's Pre-K initiative....Expanding access to high-quality early childhood education is one of the most important investments we can make in the future of our children, our workforce, and our communities.**

*Tom Guidugli, Mayor, City of Newport*



# Statements of Support



“

**Pre-K for all will have a community wide positive impact across Gallatin County. Ready to learn and ready to grow.**

Ryan Morris, *Gallatin County Judge/Executive*



“

**Pre-K for All is a workforce development initiative....By removing one more barrier to working parents, we are increasing the number of people who are ready to take on good jobs in Kentucky at companies like Novelis.**

Tom Lilienthal, *Novelis Plant Manager*



“

**Young children need cognitive stimulation if they are to become the best learners they can be. Early childhood education is appropriate for all children, as it provides an important preparation for kindergarten.**

Dr. Julia Roberts, *Vice Chair, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence*



“

**Pre-K For All is important to our future as a company because it will make our Kentucky opportunity more attractive, our employees' lives less stressful, and will instill confidence in their children for a lifetime of success in school and beyond.**

Clay Ford, *Partner, EM Ford*

# Statements of Support



“

**Early childhood education builds a strong foundation for lifelong success, saves taxpayers money in the long run, and is an investment that pays lifelong dividends.**

*Todd Alcott, Mayor, City of Bowling Green*



“

**I support this initiative for Pre-K as a positive step for preparing our children for a better education and a higher quality of life.**

*Bob Vance, Former Secretary of the Public Protection Cabinet, Member of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees*



“

**Pre-K for all ensures every student that enters Kindergarten is ready to learn.**

*John Holbrook, Business Manager, Tri-State Building and Construction Trades Council*



“

**The new jobs, businesses, leaders, and thinkers of tomorrow start with Pre-K for All. When there is an opportunity for a brilliant and brighter future for our kids here in Kentucky, that's something that will not just take students further, but will take Kentucky further. Think smart Kentucky!**

*Joshua Ravenscraft, CEO and Co-founder of New Frontier Outfitters in Morehead*

# Statements of Support



“

**This initiative is a significant step forward for Kentucky’s youngest children and will help our workforce, stabilize school funding, and promote economic growth — especially in rural regions like ours.**

Matthew Wireman, *Magoffin County Judge/Executive*



“

**Pre-K For All is more than early education — it’s a powerful investment in our children, our families, and our future.**

Michael Rowe, *Superintendent of Rowan County Schools*



“

**When families have reliable, affordable access to preschool, they can take advantage of the good jobs being created right here in our state. As a leading manufacturer in Kentucky...we see the tremendous value of expanding....Pre-K for All is more than an education initiative, it’s a long-term investment in people and our economic strength.**

Kevin Nolan, *President & CEO of GE Appliances, A Haier Company*



“

**I saw firsthand how access to quality Pre-K can change the trajectory of a child’s life....If we don’t seize this moment, we’ll look back and wish we had. Let’s not miss this chance!**

Dr. Andy Belcher, *Former Assistant Superintendent of Hopkins County Schools*



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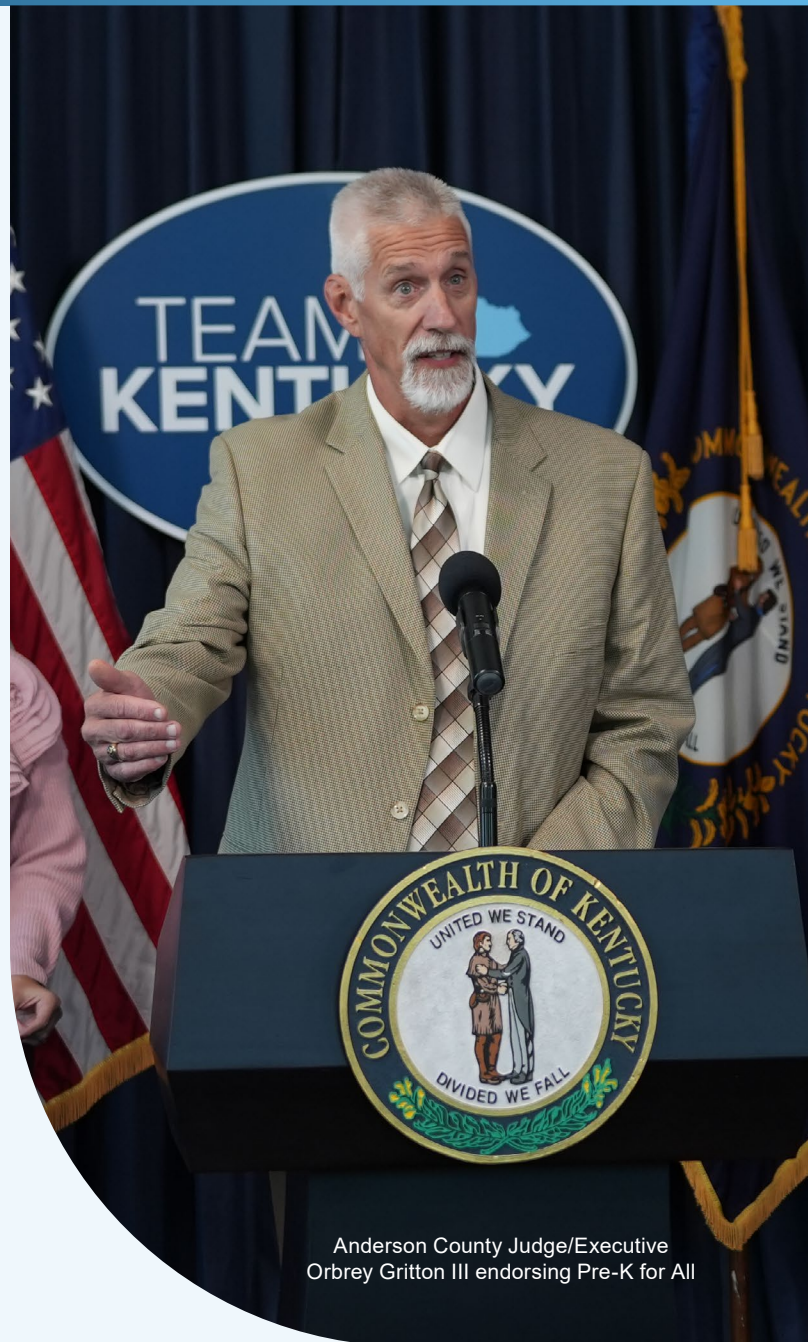


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Anderson County Judge/Executive  
Orbrey Gritton III endorsing Pre-K for All

Covington Independent Schools Superintendent Alvin Garrison  
discussing how Pre-K for All will help Kentucky compete





# Pre-K for All

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