

## Your Questions:

- 1) Looking across the U.S., or even internationally if it's readily available, how many states have proposed or instituted mandatory, full-time or even part-time, pre-K programs (including proposed methods of funding such programs)?
- 2) Could you provide any information on cost-benefit analysis of preschool programs and how participating students fared through subsequent school years and careers? Are there any related studies showing positive or negative outcomes of having a pre-K education?
- 3) Anything on the cost to states and the impact preschool programs have on an economy, including the ability for parents of preschool-aged children to return to the workforce? Is there anything more recent than 2009 or any other resources that have a greater scope of data? Any other sources that can speak to the economic return of such programs?

## Our Response:

As you are likely aware, the attention pre-K has gotten has steadily increased over the past decade. The COVID-19 pandemic has really exacerbated many existing issues regarding funding, access, quality and others. The following information looks at compulsory education requirements, the short- and long-term effects of pre-K on outcomes, and return on investment information.

### Compulsory Attendance Requirements

Across the United States, compulsory school attendance information can be used to determine if any state requires pre-K attendance, either full- or part-time. A [2020 ECS resource on compulsory attendance](#) shows that while three states (**Florida, Illinois and Wisconsin**) begin to provide free education at age 4, no state requires mandatory attendance at age 4. According to this resource, 38 states require compulsory attendance at age 5 or age 6. In comparison, **Nevada's** compulsory school requirements are age 7-18; only 12 other states require attendance at 7 or older.

In 2021 legislative sessions thus far, only **Georgia** is proposing to make pre-K mandatory with [this introduced legislation](#). This bill also includes the method by which they would provide funding. While pre-K may not be mandatory in any state, several states have near universal attendance in their state pre-K programs. This is the only bill I've seen in recent years that would make this change. The **District of Columbia, Florida and Vermont** do not cap funding amounts, enrollment numbers or deadlines in their pre-K programs. Seven additional states have relatively high attendance (GA, IL, IA, NY, OK, WV and WI). The National Institute for Early Education Research's annual pre-K report has more in-depth information on enrollment in its [state profiles](#).

Internationally, several countries have strong pre-K programming. An [NCSL resource](#) provides a high-level summary of the early learning and care efforts in different countries (Element #1, pages 11-13). Additionally, the graphic at the top of this [NCSL early learning working group report](#) shows the percentages of students attending pre-K across several countries, compared with the United States.

### Cost-Benefit/Return-On-Investment Research

There have been a handful of resources that analyze the cost-benefit of existing pre-K programs. A 2016 [article](#) on the economic returns of early childhood education can serve as a primer on the topic. This [meta-analysis](#) from the Brookings Institution also breaks down this topic. In question 3 below, I provide additional resources specific to economic and other benefits.

The economic benefits of pre-K have been written about extensively. Generally, these estimates range from 2:1 (conservative) up to 13:1 for every dollar invested. Based on ECS's review, a 2:1 to 4:1 range is defensible; the 13:1 range has been frequently cited, however. Below are a few resources based on the range they cite:

- **2:1** Rand Corporation ([full report](#))
- **2:1 to 4:1** Brookings Institution meta-analysis ([full report](#))
- **13:1** The Heckman Equation ([1-pager](#) and [full report](#))

### [Pre-K Effectiveness Research](#)

In June 2020, ECS released [an updated review](#) of the effectiveness of pre-K programs on educational achievement, in addition to social and emotional learning and other areas (e.g., graduation and more). Refer to pages 3 and 4, which provide visual overviews of the studies' findings. Above all else, there is strong research that supports the short- and long-term impacts of [high-quality pre-K](#), not just having access to pre-K.

For additional information on several research studies/evaluations of pre-K programs, please see a 2019 [information request](#) completed by ECS. The Brookings Institution also did a meta-analysis in 2017 with top researchers from around the country ([consensus statement](#) and [full report](#)).

### [Additional Information on Pre-K \(Workforce and Survey\)](#)

A [2018 study](#) by the Center for American Progress reviewed the impact of the District of Columbia's universal pre-K program on mothers returning to work, and found a 12% increase. One caveat is that D.C.'s program provides full-day pre-K for children ages 3 and 4 (most states just have this for 4-year-olds).

There has been [a lot of writing](#) on the importance of providing high-quality and accessible child care as it pertains to getting parents back to work to stimulate the economy. The same arguments made here [would apply to pre-K](#). A [recent poll](#) found that this issue has strong bipartisan support among voters.

### [Additional Resource](#)

- [50-State Comparison: Early Care and Education Governance](#) (ECS, 2020). This database contains information on state agencies that provide supports including home visits, child care, pre-K, special education and more. Coordinated governance structures across agencies can lead to more efficient and streamlined service delivery for children and families.