

Expelling Preschoolers

According to the report, *Prekindergarteners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems*, pre-kindergarten students are being expelled at a higher rate than K-12 students. (Expulsion is defined as complete and permanent removal of a student from an entire education system.)

This study, conducted by William S Gilliam, Ph.D. of the Yale University Child Study Center, was based on 3,898 pre-kindergarten classrooms (81% response rate) that represented all of the nation's 52 state-funded pre-kindergarten systems operating across 40 states. Weighted results indicated that 10.4% of pre-kindergarten teachers reported expelling at least one preschooler in the past 12 months and 19.9% of those teachers reported expelling more than one. Although the rate is lower than previously reported for childcare programs, the rate is 3.2 times the rate for K-12 students. Some results included:

- Variability in rates was found across states.
- Rates were highest for older preschoolers and African-Americans.
- Boys were over 4½ times more likely to be expelled than girls.
- Rates were lowest in classrooms in public schools and highest in faith-based centers and for-profit childcare.
- Access to classroom-based mental health consultation made expulsion less likely.

Programs Surveyed in the SECA States		
State	Total # of Classrooms	State Pre-kindergarten System Name
Alabama	69	Office of School Readiness Pre-kindergarten
Arkansas	177	Arkansas Better Chance (ABC)
Florida	1,602	Florida Partnership for School Readiness
Georgia	3,112	Georgia Pre-kindergarten Program for Four-Year-Olds
Kentucky	1,024	Kentucky Preschool Program
Louisiana	268	Preschool Block Grant
Mississippi	0	N/a
N Carolina	137	More at Four
Oklahoma	1,343	Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program
S Carolina	608	Early Childhood Program (1/2/day)
Tennessee	177	Early Childhood Education Pilot Program
Texas	5,665	Public School Pre-kindergarten
Virginia	419	Virginia Preschool Initiative
W Virginia	228	Public School Early Childhood Education

Source: *Prekindergarten Expulsion Rates by State Prekindergarten System*. Table 1. The Foundation for Child Development. New York, NY. May 2005

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Pre-kindergarten Expulsion Rates by State Pre-kindergarten System : The SECA States		
State Pre-kindergarten System	Expulsion Rate (per 1000)	National Rank
Alabama Office of School Readiness Pre-kindergarten	14.12	#4
N Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program	13.04	#6
Tennessee Early Childhood Education Pilot Program	12.54	#8
Virginia Preschool Initiative	10.25	#13
Georgia Pre-kindergarten Program	8.58	#17
Oklahoma Early Childhood Four-Year-Old Program	8.24	#20
Florida Partnership for School Readiness	6.64	#24
Texas Public School Pre-kindergarten	5.99	#27
Arkansas Better Chance	4.40	#36
Louisiana Preschool Block Grant	3.58	#39
W Virginia Public School Early Education Program	3.57	#40
South Carolina Early Childhood Program	2.04	#47
Oklahoma State Funding for Head Start	1.51	#49
Kentucky Preschool Program	0	#52

Source: *Prekindergarten Expulsion Rates by State Prekindergarten System. Table 3.* The Foundation for Child Development. New York, NY. May 2005

Expulsion Rates for Pre-kindergarten and K-12 by State		
State	Pre-K Expulsions/1000	K-12 Expulsions/1000
Alabama	14.12	1.03
North Carolina	13.04	1.90
Tennessee	12.54	3.79
Virginia	10.25	1.49
Georgia	8.58	1.76
Florida	6.64	0.37
Oklahoma	6.12	2.15
Texas	5.99	2.93
Arkansas	4.40	1.20
Louisiana	3.58	7.78
West Virginia	3.58	1.43
South Carolina	2.04	7.16
Kentucky	0.00	1.21
Mississippi	No Pre-K	3.20

Source: *Prekindergarten Expulsion Rates by State Prekindergarten System. Table 4.* The Foundation for Child Development. New York, NY. May 2005

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Estimated Number of Pre-kindergarten Children Expelled by State		
State	Estimated Pre-K Enrollment	Estimated Number Expelled
Alabama	1,217	17
Arkansas	3,462	15
Florida	30,549	203
Georgia	61,234	526
Kentucky	21,735	0
Louisiana	5,014	18
North Carolina	2,166	28
Oklahoma	25,454	156
South Carolina	12,561	26
Tennessee	3,175	40
Texas	110,637	662
Virginia	6,605	68
West Virginia	4,312	15

Source: *Prekindergarten Expulsion Rates by State Prekindergarten System. Table 5.* The Foundation for Child Development. New York, NY. May 2005

Findings From the Report

- Pre-kindergarten expulsion rates were higher than those found for K-12 students in all but 3 of the 40 states that fund pre-kindergarten (Kentucky, South Carolina & Louisiana).
- Structural differences in the way state pre-kindergarten programs are implemented in the states may help to explain the variability of expulsion rates across states.
- Differences in expulsion rates were noticeable on the basis of child age, gender, and race/ethnicity.
- Access to mental health consultation assisted in lowering the expulsion rate.

Policy Implications for the SECA States

- **State pre-kindergarten systems need to have training and support systems in place to assist teachers in dealing with behavioral problems in young children. Adequate funding and/or structured referral capability should be provided to ensure that all pre-kindergarten children receive services prior to kindergarten entry.**
- **Pre-service and in-service teacher training should address meeting the needs of children with behavior problems.**
- **When behavior problems are so severe that a child cannot safely be accommodated in a regular pre-kindergarten classroom, alternative settings should be available. Pre-kindergarten children who are expelled from these programs only arrive at kindergarten with more challenging behaviors and ill-prepared to successfully complete kindergarten.**
- **Family participation in the determination of the best placement for a child with behavior problems should be structured into the pre-kindergarten standards.**

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