



The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center
at Dartmouth College

*The Center for Public Policy
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The Class of 1964 **Policy Research Shop**

Peer Models for VT Pre-K/Childcare Expansion

For the Vermont House Committee on Education

Thomas Lane '24

This report was written by undergraduate students at Dartmouth College under the direction of professors in the Rockefeller Center. Policy Research Shop (PRS) students produce non-partisan policy analyses and present their findings in a non-advocacy manner. The PRS is fully endowed by the Dartmouth Class of 1964 through a class gift in celebration of its 50th Anniversary given to the Center. This endowment ensures that the Policy Research Shop will continue to produce high-quality, non-partisan policy research for policymakers in New Hampshire and Vermont.





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Who I am

- Senior studying economics, German, and public policy
- Background in education, health, and welfare policy
- Originally from Minnesota

What the Policy Research Shop is

- Nonpartisan policy research center
- Student researchers perform research/analysis on topics requested by NH/VT state legislators
- Free of charge for you!



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Our guiding questions for this report

- What peer state models exist for Vermont pre-K and childcare expansion? How can the state most cost-effectively create and expand high quality programs given its predominantly rural communities?

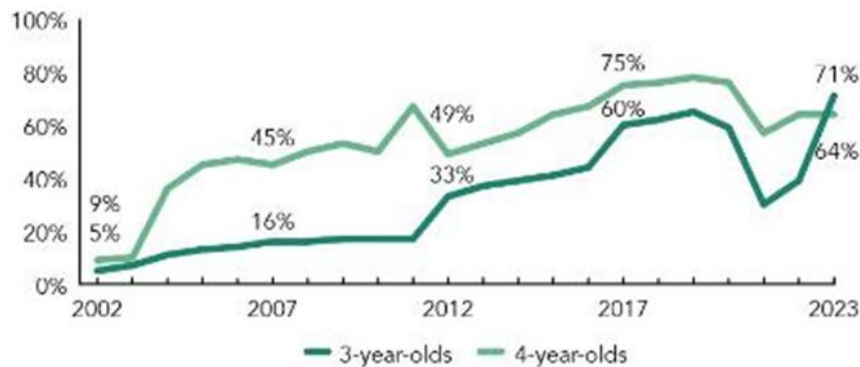
Our methodology

- Primarily background research
- Statutes, think tank reports, state agency materials, news reports, etc.
- Full report contains case studies on Oklahoma, Colorado, Maine, West Virginia, and Brandenburg (Germany)
- Plus more in-depth analysis of benefits of pre-K and current federal policy

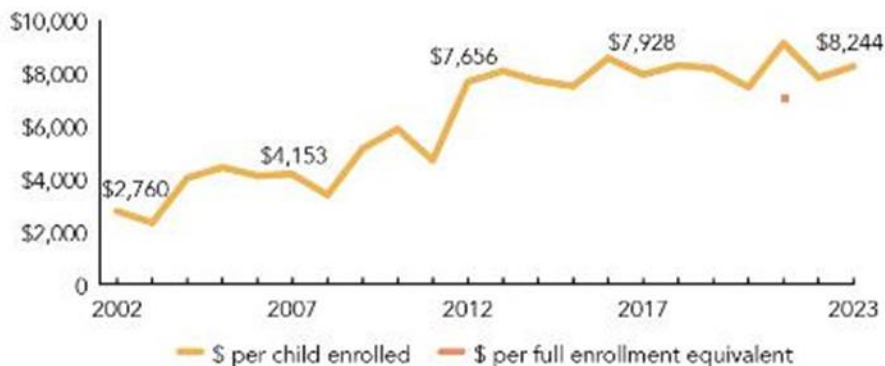


Pre-K Situation in Vermont

PERCENT OF STATE POPULATION ENROLLED



STATE SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED
(2023 DOLLARS)



- Among top in the nation for percent enrolled!
- Affordability another important metric
- Act 76 will likely improve enrollment but does not specifically target capacity shortages
- Spending/child does not shadow enrollment
- Higher enrollment often means lower spending per child



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West Virginia



- Implemented 2002-2012
- Lower enrollment percent than Vermont for 3-year-olds
- County education boards figure out how to accommodate the kids
 - Often collaborate with existing private programs to supplement public offerings

Most important takeaway

- No segregation by family income!
- All kids can be in the same program, regardless of Head Start status
- Funding streams combined behind the scenes



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Oklahoma



- Passed in 1998 by accident when a state legislator snuck the program into an uncontroversial bill that closed loopholes in state school funding formula
- All public schools offer pre-K for 4-year-olds without eligibility restrictions
- 60-70% of 4-year-olds now enrolled, much lower percent of 3-year-olds than VT

Most important takeaway

- Money appropriated automatically through the state school funding formula, avoiding need for annual appropriations debate



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Brandenburg, Germany

• *Why Brandenburg?*

- State within Germany most similar to Vermont
- Germany has much more robust childcare than any US state
- German childcare system is 5th among the 41 high-income nations (USA is 40/41)

How are German “Kitas” different from what we have?

- Much less ‘educational’
- Belief that ‘school’ shouldn’t start until grade 1
- Focus on allowing parents to rejoin workforce and balance work/family
- Children begin Kita when parents want (age 3 is typical)





Childcare in Brandenburg, Germany

How did they do it?

- Step 1: Federal government declared in 2013 that all children from age 1 until 1st grade (age 6) have a legal right to a childcare spot
- Step 2: localities decide how they want to accommodate their kids
 - Through public schools, partnership with local orgs/charities, etc.
- Step 3: States ensure localities have the necessary funding to do so through formula that separately estimates expected facility and personnel costs



Childcare in Brandenburg, Germany

Results

- 2022: 95% of children 3-6 attended a Kita, 57% of children under 3
- $\frac{2}{3}$ private, $\frac{1}{3}$ public - half of private run through religious orgs
- 2019: \$7,850/child - 52.5% from localities, 34.7% from state, 12.5% from means-tested parental contributions
- Median family pays about \$150/month/child
- Gaps: not enough capacity for children under 3, insufficient personnel
- Accountability: parents can sue locality for lost wages if no available spots!



Conclusions

- ***Most efficient to provide services based on geographic areas*** than to target groups based on perceived need
 - Costs for services provided to those without perceived need can often be recouped with lower administrative costs via annual taxation than program-specific means-testing
- ***Flexibility on delivery options*** for localities is a common theme across successful models
- ***Making funding regular*** through school funding formulas rather than subject to annual legislative debate/renewal provides predictability to stakeholders



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Questions?

Read the full report on our website:

<https://rockefeller.dartmouth.edu/report/vermont-pre-k-and-childcare-expansion-context-and-peer-models>

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If you have other research needs, please reach out to her!