

News Release

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4K reaches 80 percent of Wisconsin school districts

MADISON — Eighty percent of Wisconsin school districts offer 4-year-old kindergarten (4K), educational programming that has been growing throughout the state.

Sixteen school districts opened 4K programs this year. The 333 districts that provide 4K programs are serving 38,075 children, an enrollment increase of more than 4,000 from last year. Of the districts providing 4K, 101 do so through the community approach, which blends public and private resources to allow more options for the care and education of all 4-year-olds.

School Year	Number of Districts	Number of Students
2005-06	234	20,959
2006-07	257	24,078
2007-08	283	27,759
2008-09	319	33,976
2009-10	333	38,075

NOTE: While 16 districts added 4K in the 2009-10 school year, the net increase is 14.

Licensed teachers provide instruction for all public school district 4K programs. In the community approach, some districts provide a licensed 4K teacher in a private child care setting, some contract with Head Start or the child care setting for the licensed teachers, and others bring child care into the licensed 4K public school program or mesh licensed 4K services with a Head Start program. Wisconsin is one of the nation's leading models for combining educational and community care services for 4-year-olds.

"Four-year-old kindergarten lays the foundation for every child to graduate ready for the workforce or further education," said State Superintendent Tony Evers. "These programs welcome children as they are and help them develop skills that lead to educational success. And, research shows that while 4K helps all children, it bridges the effects of poverty that often puts children from low-income families at an educational disadvantage."

The Chicago Child-Parent Centers and the Ypsilanti, Michigan, Perry Preschool Study have some of the most well-known research into the benefits of early childhood education for children from economically disadvantaged families. Reports from those programs and other research shows that skills young children develop in quality early education programs help them successfully transition to school. Overall, children who attend early learning programs that are developmentally appropriate do better in school, have fewer referrals for special education, and have lower retention rates, meaning fewer students need extra services or are held back in grade.

Additionally, children who attend quality, early childhood programs are more likely to graduate from high school, work, and avoid incarceration.

Wisconsin was one of five states involved in the National Center for Early Development and Learning study of State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEEP). Key findings of children's progress showed Wisconsin 4K students were above the national average on three of the four academic skills assessed. The SWEEP study found improvement in all four dimensions of children's social skills: assertiveness, frustration tolerance, task orientation, and peer social skills. Overall both poor and non-poor students attending 4K programs in Wisconsin gained academic, language and literacy, and social skills.

"Though learning to write your name and to identify letters in the alphabet are important early academic skills, the child development needed for school success includes so much more," Evers explained. "The SWEEP study found Wisconsin kids not only improved intellectually, they made gains in social skills while attending 4K programs."

Quality 4K programs are developmentally appropriate to the age, culture, and individuality of each child. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, updated in 2008, provide a framework of developmentally appropriate expectations for young children. The standards specify five spheres of child development: health and physical development, social and emotional development, language development and communication, approaches to learning, and cognition and general knowledge. While acquisition of skills in these domains isn't lockstep, most children gain a certain level of development in each area by the time they reach first grade.

"School districts know the value of 4K," Evers said. "The expansion of 4K across the state, especially through the community approach, is a positive trend in education. I applaud the districts that started 4K programs this year and encourage every community to consider offering 4K services to young children and their families."

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NOTES: A list of districts providing 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) during the 2009-10 school year follows. Those with an asterisk newly implemented 4K programming this year. Those in bold are using a community approach to provide 4K. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2009_59.pdf. Additional information about 4K in Wisconsin is available on the Department of Public Instruction website <http://dpi.wi.gov/ec/ec4yrpag.html>.

Districts Offering 4-Year-Old Kindergarten

2009-10 School Year

A-B

Abbotsford
Adams-Friendship Area
Albany
Algoma
Alma
Alma Center
Almond-Bancroft

* **Altoona**

Amery
Arcadia
Argyle
Ashwaubenon

Athens
Auburndale

Augusta

Bangor

* **Baraboo**

Barneveld
Barron Area
Beaver Dam

Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine

Belmont Community

Beloit

Beloit Turner

Benton

Birchwood

Black Hawk

Black River Falls

Blair-Taylor

Bloomer

* **Boscobel Area**

Bowler
Boyceville Community

Brillion

Brodhead

Brown Deer

Bruce

Butternut

C-D

Cadott Community

Cambria-Friesland

Cameron

Campbellsport

Cashton

Cassville
Cedar Grove-Belgium Area

Chequamegon

Chetek

Chilton

Chippewa Falls Area

Clayton

Clear Lake

Clinton Community

Clintonville

Cochrane-Fountain City

Colby

Coleman

Colfax

Columbus

Cornell

Crandon

Crivitz

Cuba City

Cudahy

Cumberland

De Soto Area

Deerfield Community

Delavan-Darien

Denmark

Dodgeand

Dodgeville

Drummond Area

Durand

E-G

East Troy Community

Eau Claire Area

Edgar

Edgerton

Elcho

Eleva-Strum

Elk Mound Area

Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah

Ellsworth Community

Elmwood

Erin

Fall River

Fennimore Community

Flambeau

Florence

Fond du Lac

Fontana J8

Fort Atkinson

Fox Point J2

Frederic

Freedom Area

Galesville-Ettrick-
Trempealeau

Geneva J4

Gillett

Gilman

Gilmanton

Glendale-River Hills

Glenwood City

Goodman-Armstrong

Granton Area

Grantsburg

Green Bay Area

Green Lake

Greendale

Greenfield

Greenwood

Gresham

H-L

Hamilton

Hartland-Lakeside J3

Hayward Community

Herman #22

Highland

Hilbert

Hillsboro

Holmen

Howards Grove

* **Howard-Suamico**

Hurley

Hustisford

Independence

Iola-Scandinavia

Iowa-Grant

Ithaca

Janesville

Jefferson

Johnson Creek

Juda

Kaukauna Area

Kenosha

Kewaskum

Kewaunee

Kickapoo Area

Kiel Area

Kimberly Area

Kohler

La Crosse

La Farge

Lac du Flambeau #1

Ladysmith-Hawkins

Lake Geneva J1

Lake Holcombe

Lake Mills Area

Lancaster Community

Laona

Lena

Linn J4

Linn J6

Little Chute Area

Lomira

Loyal

Luck

M-N

Manawa

Manitowoc

* **Maple**

Maple Dale-Indian Hill

Marathon City

Marinette

Marion

Marshall

Marshfield

Mauston

Medford Area

Mellen

Menasha

* **Menominee Indian**

Menomonee Falls

Menomonie Area

Mercer

Merton Community

Milwaukee

Mineral Point

Minocqua J1

Mishicot	Pepin Area	Seneca	Turtle Lake
Mondovi	Peshtigo	Sevastopol	Twin Lakes #4
Monona Grove	Pewaukee	* Seymour Community	Two Rivers
Monroe	Phelps	Sharon J11	Unity
Montello	Phillips	Shawano	V-W
Monticello	Pittsville	Sheboygan Area	Viroqua Area
Mosinee	Platteville	Sheboygan Falls	Wabeno Area
Necedah Area	Plum City	Shell Lake	Walworth J1
Neillsville	Plymouth	Shiocton	Washburn
Nekoosa	Port Edwards	Shorewood	Waterloo
Neosho J3	Port Washington-Saukville	Shullsburg	Watertown
New Auburn	Portage Community	Silver Lake J1	Waukesha
New Glarus	Potosi	Siren	Wausau
New Holstein	* Poynette	Slinger	Wausaukee
New Lisbon	Prairie du Chien Area	Solon Springs	Wautoma Area
New Richmond	Prairie Farm	Somerset	Wauwatosa
* North Cape	Prentice	South Milwaukee	Wauzeka-Steuben
North Crawford	Prescott	South Shore	Webster
North Fond du Lac	Princeton	Southern Door County	West Allis
North Lakeland	* Pulaski Community	Southwestern Wisconsin	West De Pere
Northern Ozaukee	Racine	Sparta Area	* West Salem
Northland Pines	* Randall J1	Spencer	Westby Area
Northwood	Randolph	Spring Valley	Westfield
Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton	Random Lake	Stanley-Boyd Area	Weston
Norway J7	Reedsville	Stevens Point Area	Weyauwega-Fremont
O-R	Rhineland	Stockbridge	Wheatland J1
Oak Creek-Franklin	Rib Lake	Stoughton Area	Whitefish Bay
Oakfield	Rice Lake Area	Stratford	Whitehall
Oconomowoc Area	Richfield J1	Sturgeon Bay	Whitewater
Oconto	Richland	* Sun Prairie Area	Whitnall
Oconto Falls	Richmond	Superior	Wild Rose
Omro	Rio Community	Suring	Williams Bay
Onalaska	Ripon Area	T-U	Winter
Oostburg	River Ridge	Thorp	* Wisconsin Dells
Osceola	Riverdale	Three Lakes	Wisconsin Heights
Oshkosh Area	Rosendale-Brandon	Tigerton	Wisconsin Rapids
Osseo-Fairchild	Rosholt	* Tomah Area	Wonewoc-Union Center
Owen-Withee	Royall	Tomahawk	Woodruff J1
Palmyra-Eagle Area	S	* Tomorrow River	
Pardeeville Area	Saint Croix Falls	Trevor-Wilmot Consolidated	
Parkview	Saint Francis	Tri-County Area	
Pecatonica Area	Sauk Prairie		

NOTE: The 16 districts marked with an asterisk (*) implemented 4K in the 2009-10 school year. Those in bold are using community approaches to provide 4K services. The net increase of 4K districts from 2008-09 to 2009-10 is 14.

Do We Know if Wisconsin's Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Positively Impacts Children's Development?

As enrollment in Wisconsin's four-year-old kindergarten (4K) initiative grows, interest in measuring 4K's impact on child development has also increased.

A variety of national studies (including Reynolds, 2001; Schweinhart, 2002) show substantial benefits to low income children participating in quality prekindergarten programming. Studies in several states (including Moreau, 2002 and Gormley, 2005) also demonstrate that prekindergarten participation benefits children from all income levels. Do these results hold true for Wisconsin children?

Presently, Wisconsin does not have the data to correlate student performance on statewide tests with past 4K participation. We can, however, explore the impact of 4K participation in this state by reviewing data from one national study that included Wisconsin and from several Wisconsin school districts that conducted their own studies. (Note: the state's data collection system has been redesigned to offer a better look at the impact of 4K as soon as recent 4K participants are old enough to take statewide academic tests.)

Key findings are summarized below:

1. The National Center for Early Development and Learning study of State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEET) conducted a study that examined variations among prekindergarten programs in five states (Massachusetts, New Jersey, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin). The study also related program variations to child outcomes at the end of prekindergarten and in kindergarten.

In Wisconsin, one classroom in each of 100 4K sites was randomly selected to participate in the study during the fall of 2003. Within each classroom, four children (two boys and two girls) were randomly selected, pending parental consent, resulting in a sample of 400 Wisconsin 4K students. Data collection, including direct assessment of children's early academic skills, took place in fall 2003 and spring 2004. Key findings related to children's progress are summarized below:

- In the spring of the 4K year, Wisconsin 4K students were above the national average on three of the four academic skills assessments having standardized national averages of 100, and scored particularly high on a letter-word identification subtest.
- Wisconsin students showed growth on all ten academic skills assessments between the pre-test and the post-test administrations. Gains were particularly noteworthy in students' ability to write their names and identify letters.
- Academic assessment information categorized by students' economic status showed that the performance of both poor and non-poor students improved between the fall 2003 pre-test and the spring 2004 post-test on all measures, but at both points, the scores of poor children were below their non-poor peers.
- Wisconsin 4K students improved on all nine dimensions in language and literacy. Pre-test ratings on the 1-5 scale ranged from a low of 1.53 to a high of 2.90, and post-test ratings ranged from a low of 2.22 to a high of 3.75.

- All four dimensions of children's social skills (assertiveness, frustration tolerance, task orientation, peer social skills) improved, while two of the three dimensions of children's behavior problems (conduct problems, internalizing problems, learning problems) showed slight decreases.
 - Neither poor nor non-poor students showed any change in behavior problems, while non-poor students improved more than poor students in their social skills.
2. The Eau Claire School District used the CORT (Child Observation Recording Tool), which is a locally-designed, criterion-based assessment, to measure the progress of children participating in the Eau Claire 4 Tomorrow (EC4T) program. Relevant findings include:
 - CORT data show that all reported domains and sub-domains showed improvement between the fall and winter assessments during the 2005-06 academic year, as measured by the percentage of skills mastered by participating children. Gains were particularly large in literacy, cognition and general knowledge, and fine motor development.
 3. The Montello School District gathered and reported data from the 2nd grade *TerraNova* standardized test to help assess the academic progress of students who participated in the Montello Early Learning Center (MELC), which opened in Fall 2001. Relevant findings include the following:
 - Comparing the performance of all Montello 2nd graders on the *TerraNova* between 2001-02 and 2004-05, scores are up slightly in all subject areas (Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), notwithstanding some year-to-year fluctuation.
 - In comparing 2nd grade Montello students who attended MELC to all tested 2nd graders in the district, MELC students scored slightly higher in Reading and Science, slightly lower in Language Arts, and the same in Social Studies and Math.
 4. The Wausau School District assessed participants in 4K programs using a variety of measures, including Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary tests and pre-IPT tests. Relevant findings include the following:
 - Data from the Receptive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test shows that the performance of both English-speaking and English Language Learner students improved between fall pre-tests and spring post-tests in both 2003-04 and 2004-05. Gains were particularly noteworthy for ELL students during 2003-04.
 - Over the past three years, ELL students gained an average of 9.61 standard score points on the One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test, while English-speaking students gained an average of 5.98 standard score points.
 - Pre-IPT test data show that many students were moved from low English proficiency levels A and B into higher English proficiency levels C, D, and E during 2004-05 and in prior years.

While it is difficult under Wisconsin's current assessment system to draw meaningful large-scale conclusions about the impact of 4K programming on children's development, data from the national SWEEP study as well as data collected by individual districts seem to indicate that four-year-old Kindergarten is benefiting the development of participants. In the future, data collected at the state level will provide a more complete picture of this impact.