

AN ANALYSIS OF VERMONT'S UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM CAPACITY

Overview

Nationally, Vermont's Universal Pre-K Program (UPK) has been recognized as a leader for access to and participation in publicly-funded pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds using a nationally-recognized best practice mixed-delivery system. ⁱ Vermont ranks 4th in the nation in terms of access for 4-year-olds, with 65% of 4-year-olds participating in the program in 2022. ⁱⁱ In access for 3-year-olds, Vermont ranks 2nd in the nation, with 35% of 3-year-olds participating in the program. ⁱⁱⁱ

This brief aims to analyze data from the fall of 2023 on UPK slot availability throughout the state in the current system. Of note, it does not include data on the enrollment of children as that information is not currently available statewide.

Methodology

Using a data file from the Child Development Division containing information on all regulated child care and UPK programs in Vermont, Let's Grow Kids analyzed the supply of UPK slots at the state and county levels. ^{iv} For the purposes of this analysis, the file was limited to only those programs with an indication of participating in UPK, including both community-based and school-based programs. Community-based UPK programs include UPK programs in licensed center-based child care and preschool programs, licensed family child care homes, and registered family child care homes. School-based UPK programs include programs in public school settings.

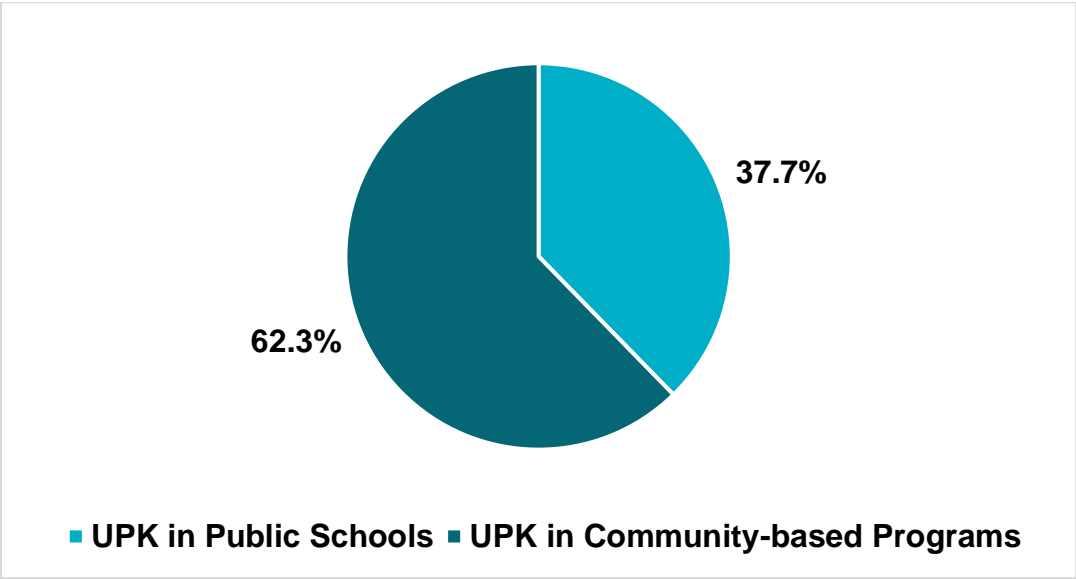
This analysis uses the reported desired capacity data for all UPK programs to determine the supply of UPK slots by setting type. LGK strives to include the best possible data for this analysis, however, the Child Development Division data file includes limitations to interpretation. Of note, the data file does not include information on whether a program offers two sessions (i.e. an AM and a PM session) using the same slot. LGK notes that further data collection and analysis would be valuable for the purposes of understanding the supply of UPK throughout the state.

Analysis of Vermont’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs

Statewide Findings

In a statewide analysis of Vermont’s universal pre-kindergarten programs, Let’s Grow Kids found that 62.3% of prequalified pre-k programs are located in community-based settings, and 37.7% of prequalified pre-k programs are located in school-based settings.

Figure 1. Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs, 2023



In terms of slots, this translates to 58.1% of universal pre-k slots being located in community-based settings and 41.9% of universal pre-k slots located in school-based settings.

Figure 2. Universal Pre-Kindergarten Slots, 2023

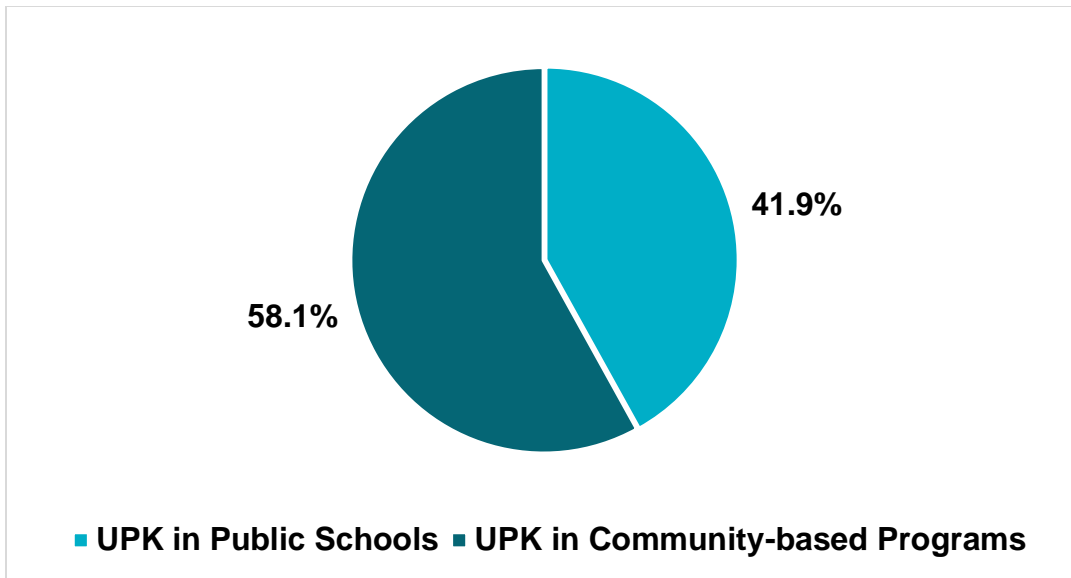


Table 1 shows the number of UPK programs and slots by setting type (school-based and community-based).

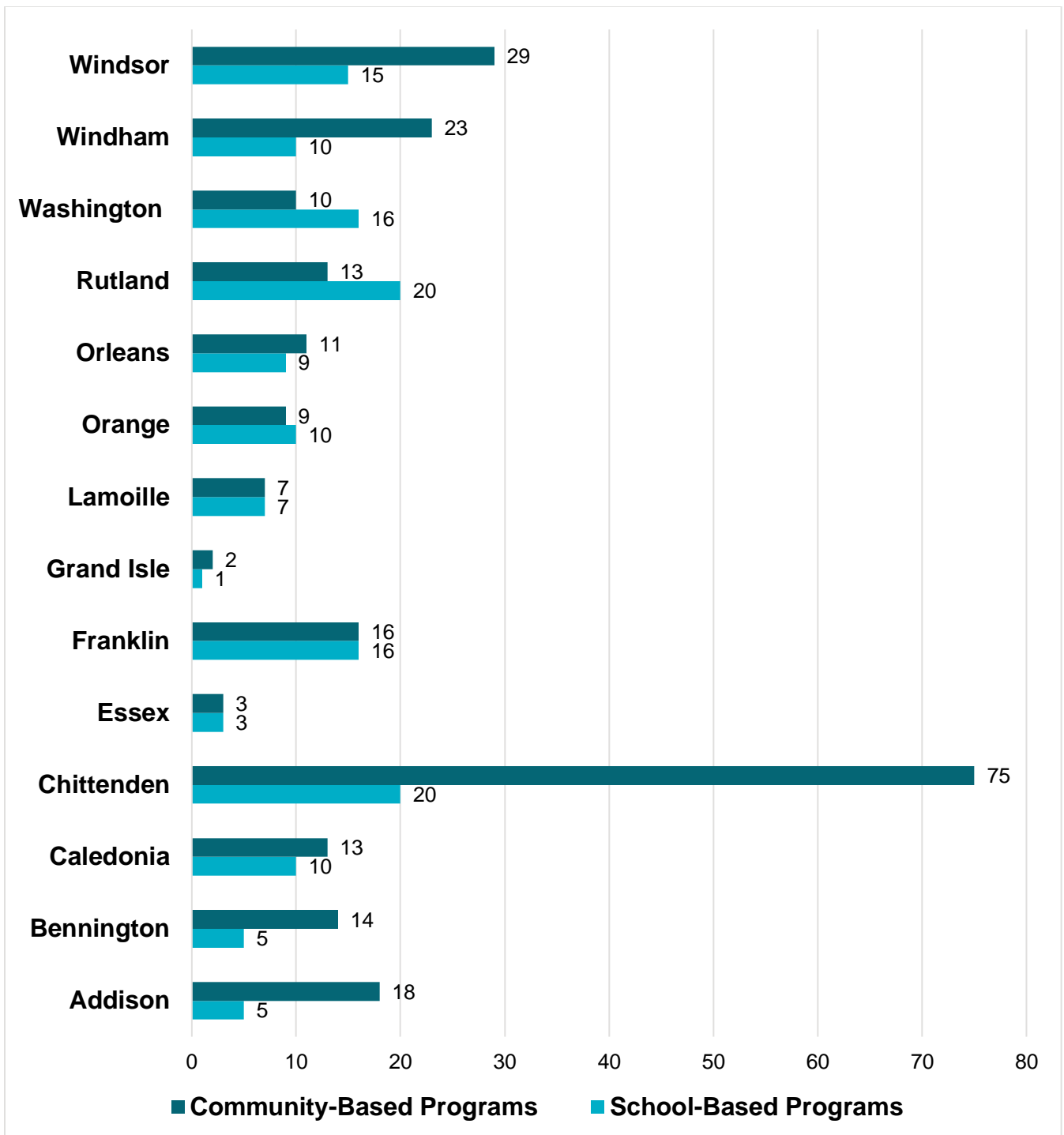
Table 1. Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs and Slots by Setting Type, 2023

| Setting | Number of Programs | Number of Slots |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| School-Based UPK | 147 | 3,537 |
| Community-Based UPK | 243 | 4,895 |

County Findings

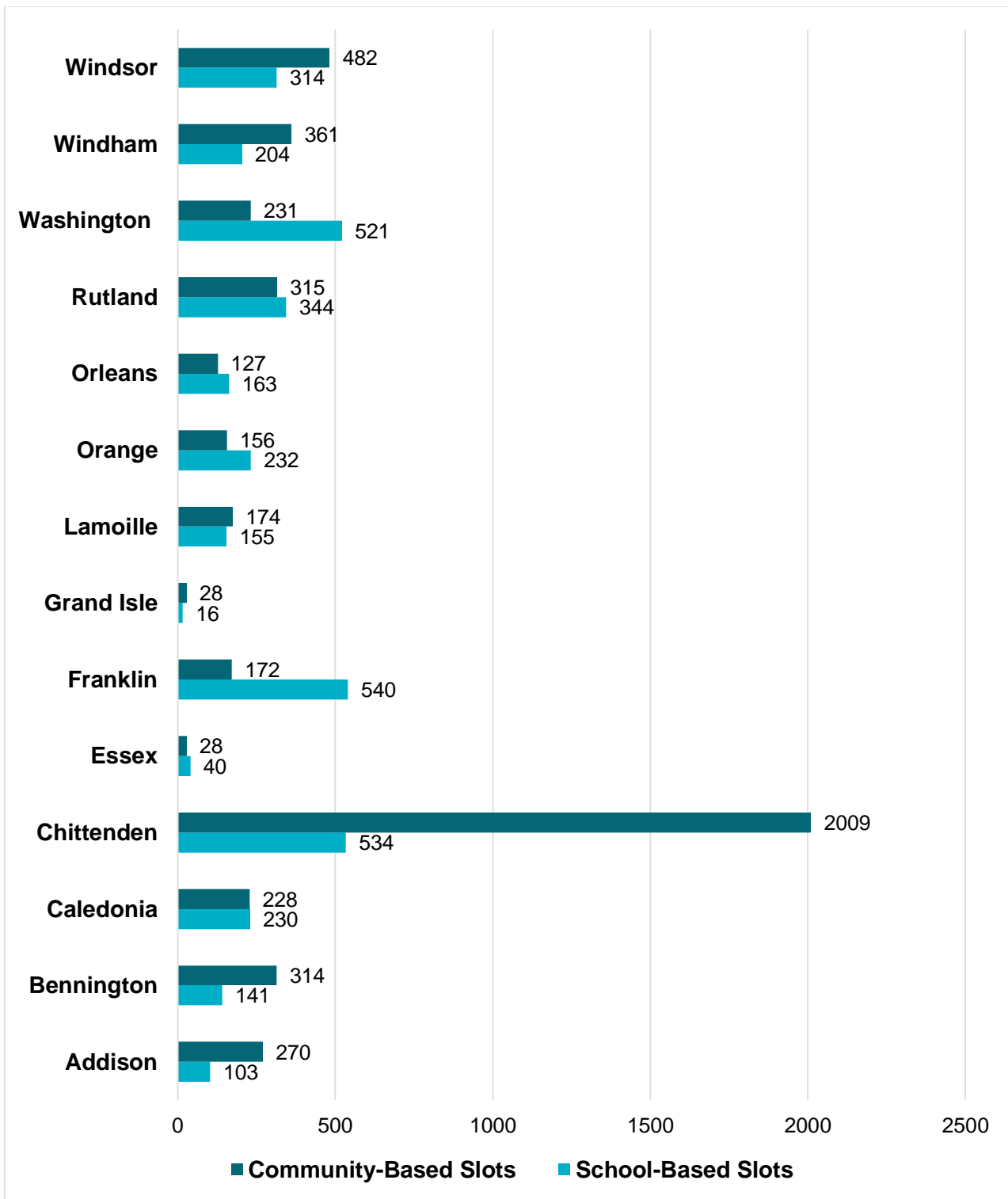
At the county level, community-based UPK programs outnumber school-based UPK programs in 8 counties, with Chittenden County having a significant difference between the number of community-based UPK programs and school-based UPK programs.

Figure 3. Universal Pre-Kindergarten Programs by County, 2023



When analyzing the number of slots, school-based UPK program slots outnumber community-based program slots in 9 counties. However, Chittenden is one of five counties in which community-based UPK program slots outnumber school-based UPK program slots by a significant amount.

Figure 4. Universal Pre-Kindergarten Slots by County, 2023



ⁱ Office of Early Childhood Development. (February 2024). 'Dear Colleague Letter on Mixed Delivery'. An Office of the Administration for Children & Families. Retrieved from: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ece/policy-guidance/dear-colleague-letter-mixed-delivery>

ii Friedman-Krauss, A., Barnett, S., Hodges, K., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B., Jost, T. (2023). 'The State of
Preschool 2022: State Preschool Yearbook.' National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER),
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey: New Brunswick, NJ. Retrieved from: [https://nieer.org/wp-
content/uploads/2023/05/YB2022_FullReport.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/YB2022_FullReport.pdf)

iii Ibid.

iv Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division. (2023). Data on regulated child
care and early education programs in Vermont as of September 30, 2023.