

Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

Executive Summary

January 9, 2024

The Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference met on January 9, 2024, to adopt a revised forecast for the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK). The new forecast incorporates final 2022-23 school year and summer data, reported 2023-24 school year enrollment and payment data through November 2023, enrollment activity as of January 3, 2024, and an updated birth forecast from the November 2023 Demographic Estimating Conference. It is shaped by current year declines that continue throughout the forecast horizon. In the final two years (FY 2027-28 and FY 2028-29), increases in the new birth forecast offset most of these losses.

Final 2022-23 Data...

Final FY 2022-23 enrollment data was 81 lower than estimated in August due to lower participation in the 2022-23 school year than previously anticipated. This overall loss in enrollment for the fiscal year occurred despite higher than expected enrollment in the May/June portion of the summer program. Even so, the FTE count showed a gain of 106.88 as a result of the higher than expected level of hours completed among those who did enroll throughout the year. As FY 2022-23 concluded, total FTE enrollment was 141,381.82 relative to the estimate of 141,274.94 FTE adopted in August 2023 or the originally appropriated level of 155,878.07.

Enrollment Data Related to FY 2023-24...

Based on data through November 2023, enrollment in the July/August portion of the summer program was 160 lower than expected, with the school year on track to come in 2,341 less than projected. Combined, this is 2,501 lower than estimated in August for this period. The assumption that the upcoming May/June portion of the summer program will match last year's enrollment produces a gain of 129, for an overall loss to the current fiscal year's enrollment estimate of 2,372. After holding the rate of hours completed constant, the FTE equivalent for FY 2023-24 is 138,598.37, a reduction of 1,913.30 FTE relative to the prior forecast.

Birth Forecast Impact on Outer Years...

Forecasted growth in enrollment is based on the growth in previous Florida births that align with each cohort entering VPK. Enrollment in the current and upcoming three years is colored by actual births; however, the latest birth forecast from the Demographic Estimating Conference indicates that there will be an increase in the number of births eligible to enter VPK beginning in FY 2026-27 relative to the prior forecast. Using this information, the downward shift in VPK enrollment is moderated until it wanes in the last year of the forecast.

Projection for Participation...

The four year old population series has been frozen to the February 2023 Demographic Estimating Conference forecast for purposes of identifying relative shifts in participation rates until the 2020 Census data is fully incorporated throughout the population series. While participation rates were slowly declining from 2013-14 through 2018-19 (from 81.0% to 74.2%), the decline was exacerbated during the pandemic. The new forecast produces a participation rate of 64.8% in 2023-24, increasing to 67.0% in the outermost year (2028-29).

Enrollment, Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Enrollment, and Participation in Statewide VPK Programs

	2022-23 Final	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 Forecast	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Forecast	2027-28 Forecast	2028-29 Forecast
January 2024	141,381.82	138,598.37	136,713.40	135,321.68	144,229.94	145,547.11	147,246.37
August 2023	141,274.94	140,511.67	138,586.05	137,175.11	145,970.76	146,260.02	147,233.65
Difference	106.88	-1,913.30	-1,872.65	-1,853.43	-1,740.82	-712.91	12.72