

Waterford UPSTART

Overview

In 2009, Waterford Institute and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) launched the UPSTART pilot program in partnership with the Utah State Legislature. Each year since, the program has received successful external evaluations, and in recent years has grown to serve approximately 10,000 children annually throughout Utah—roughly 20 percent of the state’s four-year-olds.

UPSTART is a kindergarten readiness program delivered over the internet and incorporates Waterford’s Early Learning adaptive learning software with complete instruction in early reading, math, and science. Children who are four or five years old and reside in a Utah school district and have not entered kindergarten are eligible to participate in the program. Participants must have a computer that meets the minimum program specifications and have access to high-speed Internet. If these are barriers to access eligible participants may qualify for the use of a loaned computer and support for Internet connectivity. Loan qualification is based on family income and size as stated by Utah Legislation.

Families are able to sign up for UPSTART year round by pre-registering online or by phone. 30% of available slots are reserved for low-income families and families that are non-native English speakers. If demand for the program exceeds the number of slots available families may still access UPSTART by covering the cost themselves.

After registration all participants (parents) receive in person training on how to use the program and if needed receive computer and internet access training. Each family commits to use the program fifteen minutes a day for five days a week. Every family is partnered with a Personal Care Representative who monitors their child’s progress throughout the year. Families have access to live help by phone or email 6 days per week. Families will receive a weekly email with program info, off-line learning activity suggestions, and a usage report. Families will be contacted if their child's usage falls below guidelines, if usage continues below guidelines access is denied and given to a family on the waiting list.

Participation begins late summer the year before the child enters kindergarten and ends the summer before they enroll in kindergarten. During the year each child will take the Waterford Assessments of Core Skills (WACS) twice at a central location under the direction of Waterford staff, once before starting the program and once after completing the program.

UPSTART is also measured using the following metrics:

- Childrens’ weekly usage of the program
- Pre-program baseline and a post-program evaluation, using Waterford Assessment of Core Skills (WACS)
- External evaluation of the program, using a treatment and control model (longitudinal and short-term)
- Parent feedback on the program

Other Pilot Programs

From February to September 2015, the Waterford Institute piloted UPSTART outside of Utah for the first time. Three preschool centers partnered with Waterford in Clinton, West Columbia, and Charleston, South Carolina. Over 60 four year-olds participated in the self-funded pilot in preparation for kindergarten. Results from the pilot have impressed the South Carolina General Assembly into considering a state-funded UPSTART program.

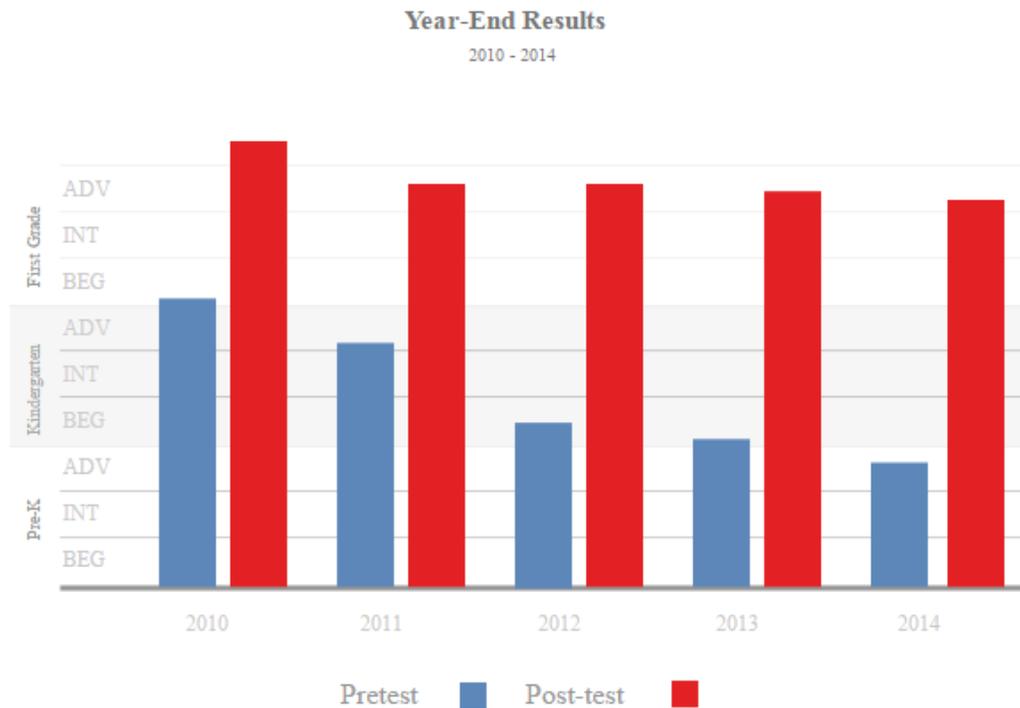
In November 2015, the Waterford Institute launched a pilot UPSTART program in Idaho. Carmen County, Cassia County, and Idaho Falls were chosen as pilot areas. Fifty four-year-olds participated in this Waterford-funded pilot in preparation for kindergarten. The Idaho Legislature will be taking the progress and results of the pilot into account as they debate the possibility of funding UPSTART.

An UPSTART pilot program is scheduled to begin in Indiana in August 2016.

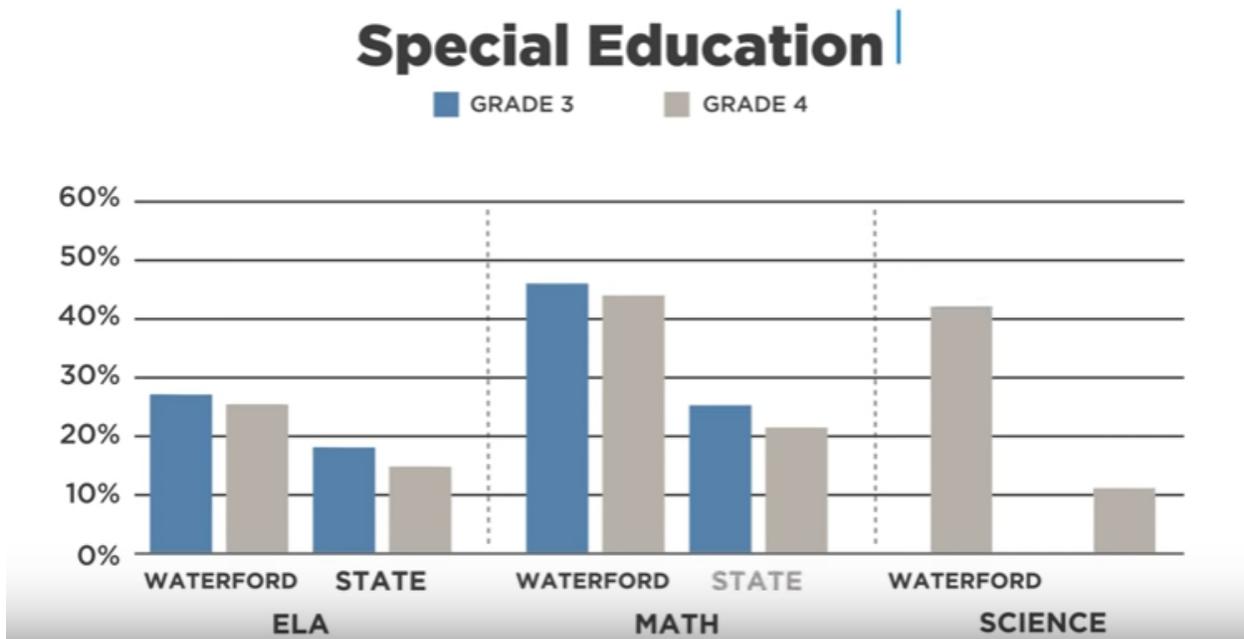
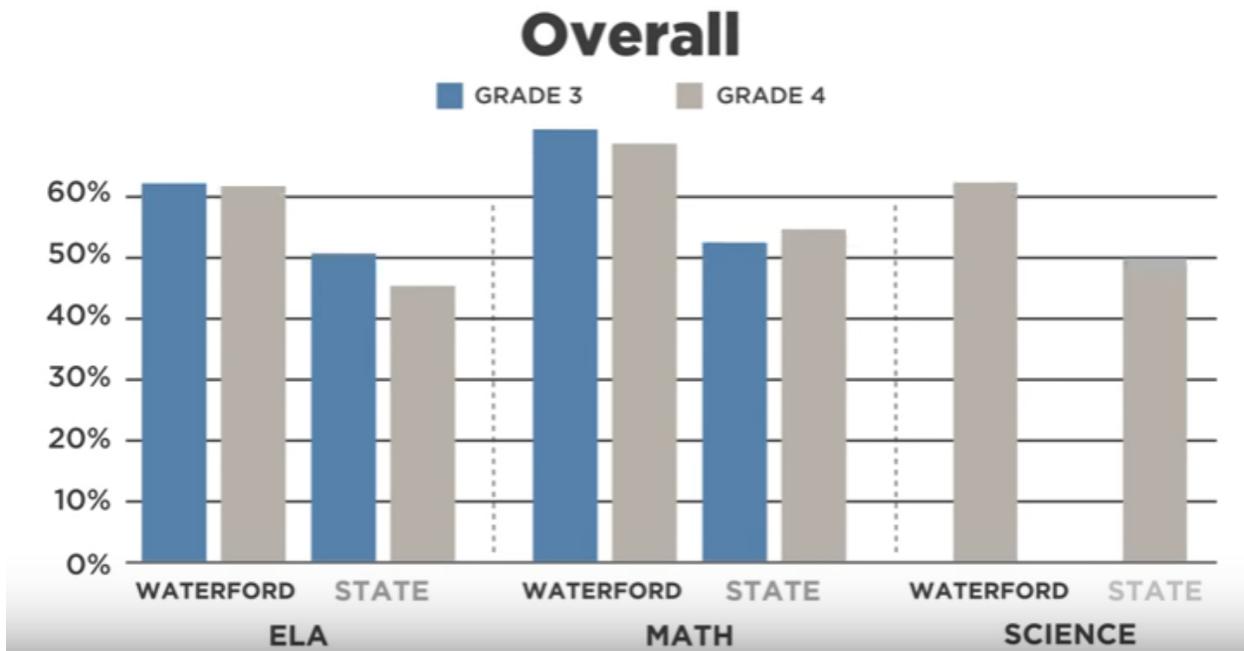
Cost and Results

UPSTART costs \$800 per child participant, currently there are an estimated 6,000 four year olds in Mesa according to the latest American Community Survey administered by the U.S. Census. 36% of those four year olds are enrolled in a pre-k program and the national average is 48%. In order for Mesa to reach the national average an additional 840 four year olds must enroll, if all were to participate in UPSTART the cost for participation would be \$672,000. This does not include the cost of internet access or computers for families that would need these tools in order to access UPSTART.

UPSTART focuses on science, math, and reading in the curriculum, and external evaluations have demonstrated that children participating in UPSTART do make gains through their participation.

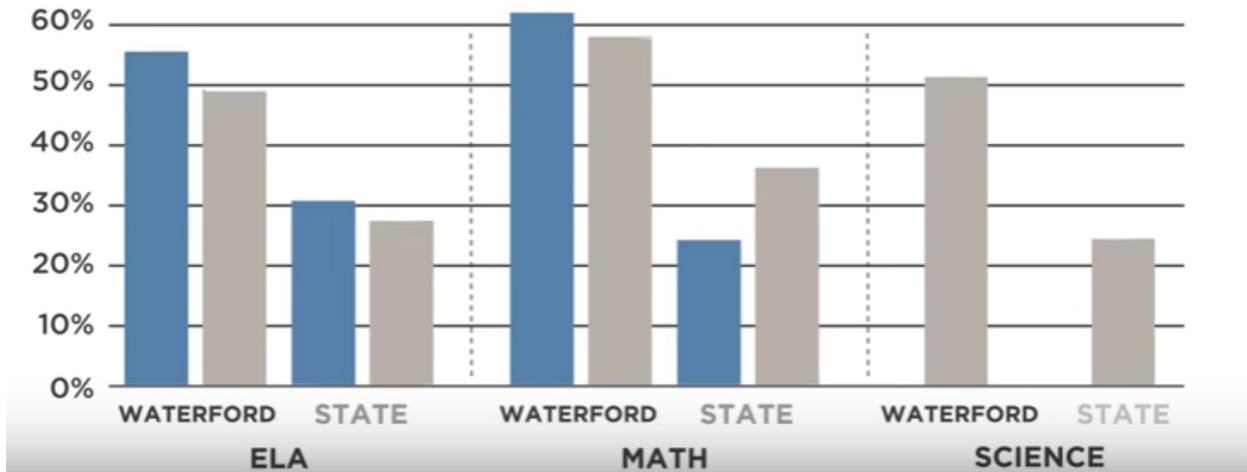


Longitudinal studies show that children who participate in UPSTART outperform their counterparts that did not participate in UPSTART in the math science and reading disciplines.



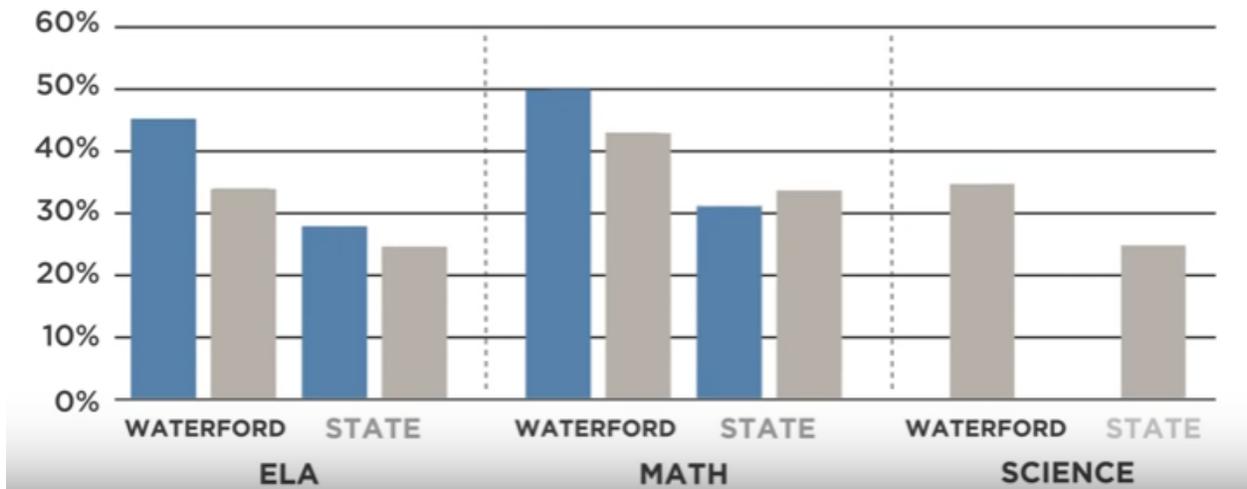
Low Income

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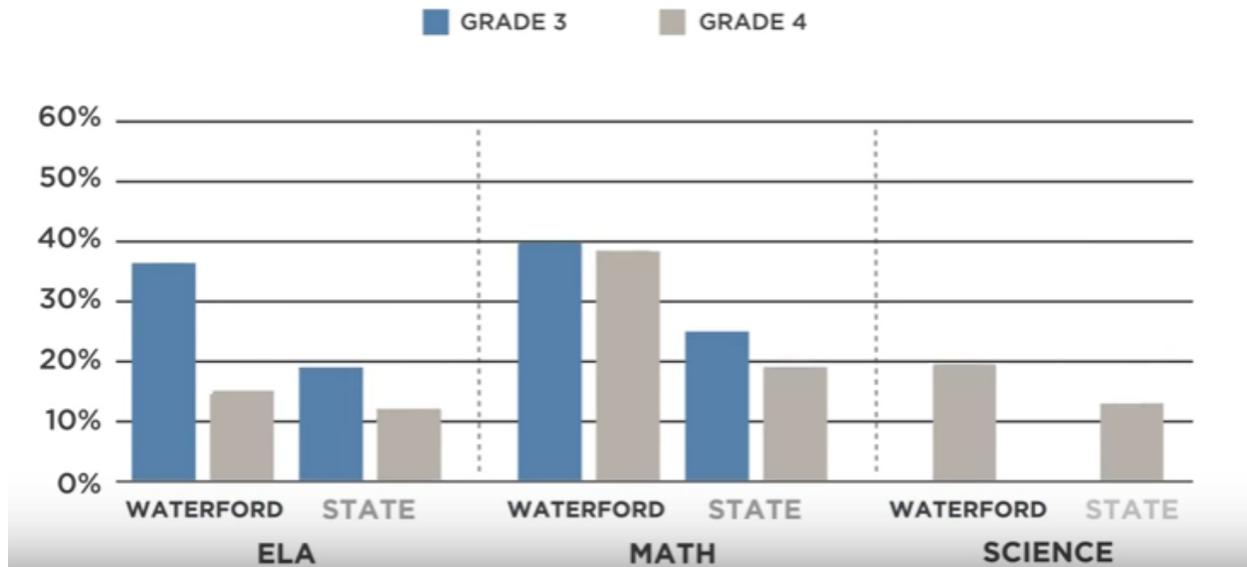


Minority

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English Language Learners



UPSTART does not address social emotional development (Learning to regulate emotions, share with others, work in a team), which is proving to be one of the strongest predictors for lifetime success. While UPSTART may improve literacy test scores in K-3, it may not result in reduced expulsions/detentions, and other social related issues that cause our most marginalized to fall behind or drop out of school. There is some debate as the effectiveness of UPSTART for marginalized populations and seems to be most effective when it is paired with a traditional pre-k program that enhances and reinforces pre-k curriculum.