Elementary enrollment continues to climb, fueled by rising numbers of children in full-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs.

Elementary enrollment is expected to remain at near-record levels this fall. About 38.4 million children will be enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8 in 2005, including 33.5 million children in public schools and 4.9 million in private schools. This reflects a slight decline of about 1 percent in Pre-K–8 enrollments since 2001. Public elementary school enrollment rose by 14 percent between 1990 and 2001. After the pause in enrollment growth between 2001 and 2005, elementary enrollment is expected to resume increasing. An additional 2.2 million elementary students are expected in public schools by 2014, reflecting a 6 percent increase compared to this fall.

However, there have been substantial differences in elementary school enrollment changes among the states. In general, enrollment growth in public schools has been strongest in the western states and slowest in the Northeast. In contrast to the national pattern, enrollments in the West did not decrease between 2001 and 2005 and are expected to increase by 0.5 percent between 2001 and 2005 and an additional 14 percent by 2014. Meanwhile, enrollment in the Northeast declined by 4 percent between 2001 and 2005 and is expected to decrease by another 1 percent by 2014. Over the entire 2001 to 2014 time period, the states with the most rapid increases in enrollments are expected to be Nevada, Utah, Texas, Idaho, and California—all with increases of over 15 percent.

Preprimary Enrollment
Enrollment rates of three- to five-year-old children in preprimary programs rose between 1994 and 2003, with most of the increase occurring during the late 1990s. In 2003, 42 percent of three-year-old children were enrolled in a preprimary school program, compared to 34 percent enrolled in 1994. Similarly, the proportion of four-year-olds in preprimary programs rose from 60 percent to 68 percent. In contrast, the proportion of five-year-olds enrolled (86 percent in 2003) did not change appreciably during the period.

The proportion of children in full-day programs at all three ages also rose. In 2003, 54 percent of three-year-olds, 50 percent of four-year-olds, and 62 percent of five-year-olds were in full-day programs.

Parent and Family Involvement
In general, parents of elementary school students are more active in school-related activities than parents of older students. For example, in 2003, more than 90 percent of students from kindergarten to fifth grade had parents who attended a scheduled parent-teacher conference, compared to only 59 percent of ninth and 10th graders’ parents.
Not only were younger children more likely to have their parents involved with activities at school, they also were more likely to receive parental support for their homework. More than 97 percent of kindergarten through grade 5 students had parents who checked that their homework was done, compared to 72 percent of ninth and 10th grade students. In addition, the younger children received homework assistance on a more frequent basis.

**International Mathematics and Science**

International comparisons of fourth and eighth graders’ performance in mathematics and science were measured through the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study in 2003. Our fourth-grade students scored 518 in mathematics, exceeding the international average of 495 and outperforming their peers in 13 of the other 24 participating countries. In the science assessment, U.S. fourth graders scored 536, which was higher than the international average of 489 and the average scores of 16 other countries. U.S. eighth graders also scored higher than the international average in both mathematics and science.

**Student Access to Computers**

Schools provide access to computers for most elementary school students, and many preschool-age children also have access to school computers. In 2003, 43 percent of three- and four-year old students used computers at school, an increase from 24 percent since 1997. The proportion of five- to nine-year-old students using computers rose from 71 percent to 80 percent during the same time period, and the proportion of 10- to 14-year-olds rose from 80 percent to 90 percent. Substantial proportions of 10- to 14-year-olds also use computers at home (72 percent).

The proportion of male and female students using computers at school was similar for each of the three age groups, as was the proportions of male and female 10- to 14-year-olds who used computers at home. However, females
were more likely than males to use the home computers for schoolwork.

There were some differences in the proportion of black and Hispanic children using computers at school in 2003, compared to white children. For example, 92 percent of 10- to 14-year-old white children used computers at school compared to a slightly smaller 88 percent of black children and 87 percent of Hispanic children. On the other hand, 82 percent of the white children used computers at home, compared to 51 percent of black and 53 percent of Hispanic children.

Internet Use

By 2003, 93 percent of all elementary schools had acquired Internet access, and the proportion of elementary classrooms with Internet access has been increasing rapidly. Elementary schools had an average of 122 computers in that year and about 90 percent of them were connected to the Internet.

“An additional 2.2 million elementary students are expected in public schools in 2014...”

Student Perceptions of School Safety

While secondary schools are more likely to report violent crimes than elementary or middle schools, crime and misbehavior may lead younger students to perceive specific areas at school as unsafe in inverse proportion to grade level. In 2003, 6 percent of sixth graders, compared with only 1 percent of 12th graders, avoided certain places at school. Students in urban areas were more likely to report avoiding places than students in suburban or rural schools, and younger students were more likely to report fear of being attacked than older students.

Bullying is another problem that is more prevalent among middle-grade students than older students. In 2003, 14 percent of sixth graders, compared with 7 percent of ninth graders and 2 percent of 12th graders reported that they had been bullied at school. In contrast to avoiding places, or fear in traveling to or from school, students in rural schools were more likely than urban or suburban students to report bullying.

School Finances

Expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools have more than kept pace with inflation and increases in student enrollment. Between 1989–90 and 1999–2000, expenditures per student rose by 12 percent, after adjusting for inflation. From 1999–2000 to 2002–03, expenditures per student rose a further 8 percent to $8,041 per student.

There have been increases in school funding from all government sources. In 2002–03, about 9 percent of school funds came from the federal government, 49 percent from state governments, and 43 percent from local governments.
Between 1989–90 and 1999–2000, funds from state sources increased by 22 percent per student, after adjustment for inflation, while local revenues per student rose by 7 percent. From 1999–2000 to 2002–03, the revenues per student from state and local sources rose by similar percentages (5 percent for state and 6 percent for local).

While federal revenue per student is substantially lower than revenue from states and local governments, it has risen rapidly. Between 1989–90 and 1999–2000, federal revenue per student increased by 39 percent, and rose a further 25 percent between 1999–2000 and 2002–03.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Data in this article were compiled from a number of sources by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Further information on education statistics may be obtained from NCES at http://nces.ed.gov.