

# NYC's UNIVERSAL PRE-K PROGRAM

## OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSAL PRE-K PROGRAM IN NYC

The City of New York is moving aggressively to implement a truly universal pre-kindergarten system in New York City that provides every 4-year-old with high-quality, full-day pre-K. These efforts have been guided by the deep expertise of city agencies, best practices from our community-based organizations, and decades of academic research that has proven high-quality pre-K is among the most effective ways to reduce economic inequality.

## FUNDING

In the first year, the funds raised by the **Personal Income Tax** increase on the city's highest earners will be used to increase the number of seats available, upgrade existing seats, and support the expansion of necessary infrastructure, such as curriculum development and improved initiatives for training and ongoing support for the Universal Pre-K program. In the following year, virtually all of the funding will be dedicated solely to programming. In subsequent years, the funds generated will be used to continue to build needed capacity, support ongoing operations, and ensure programs offer high-quality instruction and family engagement.

It is important to note that the proceeds from the proposed personal income tax surcharge will be dedicated solely to the expansion and enhancement of New York City's pre- kindergarten and after-school programs.

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING MECHANISMS

- 1. State Funds:** state appropriated \$1.5 billion over five years, or about \$340 million a year, on free full-day classes for 4-year-olds. The vast majority of that money, \$300 million, is allocated to New York City.
- 2. Start-Up and Quality Grants:** providing up to \$10,000 per classroom – covering costs needed to create enriching learning environments (e.g., targeted teacher support, materials).

## CITIES WITH UNIVERSAL PRE-K

**Chicago:** Funding for universal pre-k programs through a nearly \$17 million Social Impact Bond Program, an innovative financing format to fund Pre-K education over the next three years. This program allows the private sector to provide the capital needed to expand successful initiatives. Services are provided through Chicago Public Schools and other community based partners. Quality is determined by QRIS rating and national accreditation.

**Washington, D.C:** The nation's capital serves a higher percentage of three and four-year-olds (and spends more per child) than any state. More four-year-olds attend pre-K in the city than in 15 states with programs. Starting at age three, children can attend preschool five full days a week, paid for by the city's taxes. The preschool budget is part of the funding formula used for all schools. The city established its own quality standards including maximum class size, use of an evidence based curriculum and teacher education requirements.

**San Antonio:** In 2012, San Antonio approved a 1/8 cent sales tax increase to provide roughly \$31 million for public pre-K. The city built 4 freestanding preschool facilities and in 2017 began providing grants to other providers who could demonstrate a high quality of care. Quality is determined based on licensing status, rating in the state QRIS, accreditation etc.

**Seattle:** On November 4, 2014, Seattle voters approved a four-year, \$58 million property tax levy to provide "accessible high-quality preschool services for Seattle children designed to improve their readiness for school and to support their subsequent academic achievement." The Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) also applies for state and federal grants as they are made available to support preschool services. Seattle established its own quality criteria such as teacher credentials and use of evidence based curriculum. They use CLASS assessments to assure continued quality.

**Denver:** Locally funded Denver Preschool Program is an independent, non-profit organization that administers tuition credits made available through Referendum 1A, passed by voters in 2006. Voters approved an increase in sales tax from .12 to .15 percent sales tax. Which means .15 of every \$100 in sales tax funds tuition supports for approved preschool programs, which now reaches 70% of the city's 4-year-olds. Quality is determined by participation in a quality improvement program.

**San Francisco:** In 2015, San Francisco voters passed Proposition C, renewing the [Public Education Enrichment Fund](#) for the next 25 years. Which enhances K-12 schooling and provides funds for preschool programs. The larger initiative requires that the city set aside 4 cents for every \$100 in assessed value in property tax raised. One-third of its funds are to be used to provide every local four-year-old with a high-quality preschool education through the Preschool for All program.

**STATE FUNDING:**

More than 40 states with state-funded Universal Pre-K:

Article: <http://www.nationaljournal.com/next-america/early-childhood/you-may-be-surprised-by-the-states-that-support-pre-k-20140417>

Factsheet: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/10/28/11034.pdf>

American Institute for Research, Questions for cities considering a preschool initiative.

## Questions and Answers

### **Should preschool be for all, or only for the neediest?**

Different communities provide different answers. Salt Lake City targets low-income, disadvantaged children. New York, on the other hand, is trying to create preschool access for all of its 4-year-olds.

### **Should local initiatives focus on 4-year-olds, or 3- and 4-year olds?**

“Some suggest that it is wise to set a goal for offering preschool to both three- and four-year-old children, even if the initial focus is on four-year-olds. Two years of preschool may lead to better results than one year, although the impact of the second year may be less than from the first,” the report says.

### **What about teachers’ qualifications and pay, adult-to-child ratios, and other quality factors?**

Answers to these questions vary across communities. For example, “Seattle, Boston, New York City, and the District of Columbia require lead teachers to have bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education (ECE) or a similar field...”

On the other hand, “Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco have less rigorous teacher qualification requirements but provide higher reimbursements to programs whose lead teachers have bachelor’s degrees in ECE or a related field.”

### **When should preschools be open?**

“Some cities offer exclusively half- or full-day (defined as up to 6.5 hours) preschools; others give parents the option of either half- or full-day preschool.”

### **How much does preschool cost?**

“Boston, the District of Columbia, New York, San Antonio, and Seattle all fund programs offering at least six hours of instruction per day with relatively high-quality standards or requirements, and their expenditures per child range from \$10,000 to \$15,372 per year. A major portion of the expense in these initiatives is the compensation for lead teachers, who are required to have bachelor’s degrees and in some cases master’s degrees and/or early childhood certification.”

### **How do cities pay for preschool?**

They use multiple sources of money including sales and property taxes, family fees, and federal funds.

### **How long does it take to serve the target population?**

“Some of the initiatives, such as in Denver and New York City, attempted to serve their entire target population in Year 1, but most of the other initiatives chose to start small and gradually expand.”

### **What settings work best for preschool?**

“The preschool initiatives examined fall into two broad categories: mixed-delivery systems and single-provider systems.”

“Only two of the 10 initiatives we studied were single provider systems—Boston Public Schools (BPS) Early Education and San Antonio’s program, which is currently operated by a private nonprofit established just to administer preschool. However, both Boston and San Antonio are adding partners in other settings to complement their existing systems.”

### **Who should run preschools?**

“There are many choices for the overall administration of local preschool initiatives. A school district operates Boston’s program. City agencies administer the preschool initiatives in Seattle, West Sacramento, the District of Columbia, and New York City, whereas a nonprofit oversees administration in Denver, San Antonio, and Los Angeles.”

### **How can cities win public support?**

“Almost every initiative studied had a local politician or other leader who took on preschool as a cause.”

“In New York Bill de Blasio encouraged the state legislature to dramatically increase funding for the state’s universal preschool program. In Boston, Mayors Tom Menino and Martin Walsh worked with the local school district to expand the city’s preschools.

“Community organizers and education advocates also can provide key leadership—particularly when their advocacy is combined with the clout of local leaders.”

The report concludes that local communities will have to “consider how to make local initiatives flexible enough to align with any emerging federal or state preschool initiatives. Given the variation in the regional initiatives developing, it will also be important to evaluate the initiatives’ impacts on program quality and access and on children’s school readiness and performance. Based on the history of K–12 in the United States, figuring out the best approach to preschool is likely to require a process of continuous improvement.”

