



# Ready to Launch: New York City's Implementation Plan for Free, High-Quality, Full-Day Universal Pre-Kindergarten

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**Office of the Mayor**

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*With recognition to the Universal Pre-Kindergarten  
Implementation Working Group*

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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.

A thorough analysis by the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Education, Administration for Children's Services, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and a working group of non-profit childcare providers has determined that New York City is prepared to provide free, high-quality, full-day pre-K to the 73,250<sup>1</sup> children who require it by the 2015-2016 school year, beginning with 53,604 in September 2014.

The limitations to rapid expansion are not personnel or space, or a vision for high quality instruction and professional development — the fundamental challenge is sufficient, sustainable funding. Without a high level of multi-year, guaranteed funding, agencies and providers will be unable to secure the quality educators and space necessary to serve every child in New York City.

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. 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. The city will place these funds in a "lock-box," just as it dedicated the proceeds from tax increases in the 1990s solely to crime reduction efforts as part of the Safe Streets, Safe City initiative.

In making high-quality, full-day pre-K universal, Mayor Bill de Blasio is investing in the future of our city. Filling the gap in full-day pre-K access cannot wait. The children we could potentially place in programs this September will not get another chance to have a pre-K experience that sets them up for achievement and increased opportunities later in life. We owe it to our children to maximize the number of options to add each year, rather than set limitations driven by legislative sessions and budget processes far removed from the pressing needs of our city's children now.

Our city — in partnership with schools, community-based providers, and families — is well positioned to take this on and at a rapid pace.

City agencies have already made major strides and have an infrastructure in place to enable an increase of high-quality full-day seats by 186 percent<sup>2</sup> in the first year alone. To make the most of those investments, the city is taking a comprehensive approach to implementation that draws on lessons learned in recent years:

- 1) Define expectations for quality based on research, successful examples outside of New York, and promising practices already underway in New York City;
- 2) Employ strategies for advancing quality that build on existing systems;
- 3) Identify and execute new strategies needed to maximize the number of high-quality pre-K seats available to families this September (e.g., expanded trainings for teachers this summer).

We have made significant progress in each area. The following paper outlines the need to be met, progress made so far, and the anticipated timeline for full implementation.

## The Need

We estimate that 73,250 families are likely to need a full-day pre-K option for their 4-year-old. Currently, fewer than 27 percent of these 4-year-olds have access those services.<sup>3</sup> The remaining 53,767 children are either in a half-day free pre-K program, a free half-day program with a fee charged for the remainder of the day, or receive full-day services at programs that contract with the Administration for Children’s Services, combining half-day UPK with Child Care and Head Start services. The 12,681 children in ACS programs must meet income eligibility requirements and, in some cases, pay Child Care fees. Even if these seats are also counted as existing full-day options, that still leaves approximately 41,000 children in need of full-day services — 70 percent of whom are in high-need areas.

## Current Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Programs

	Half-day	Full-day	UPK part-day with Child Care and Head Start Extended Day	TOTAL
Public School <sup>4</sup>	7,552	16,119		23,671
DOE CBOs <sup>5</sup>	18,812	3,364		22,176
ACS CBOs <sup>6</sup>			12,681	12,681
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,364</b>	<b>19,483</b>	<b>12,681</b>	<b>58,528</b>

In some communities, the gap between the number of kindergarten students and existing full-day pre-K seats is well above 1,000. These seats are often in the same areas where parents are taking advantage of existing options and demonstrating a preference for full-day pre-K over half-day options.

## **Assisting Students Whose Primary Language is Not English**

Nearly one-in-five children in New York City kindergarten classes is an English Language Learner.<sup>7</sup> As New York City continues to attract and welcome immigrants from all over the world, creating the best pre-K possible for this group of children will become even more important. Reaching these children earlier to develop vocabulary and language skills will increase their ability to thrive and succeed in the K-12 system and deepen their overall comprehension.

We will ensure pre-K programs effectively support these learners by taking a comprehensive, systems building approach. On the front end, schools and CBOs applying for full-day pre-K will complete a community needs assessment and demonstrate to reviewers how their instructional and family engagement practices advance these students' learning toward state pre-K standards. Once selected, pre-K providers will receive support from DOE instructional coaches. These coaches, under the new plan, will receive intensive training in assisting students whose native language is not English. Additional support will be provided as necessary through the start-up grants and tailored to the needs of the program. For example, while some programs may need more multilingual books, others may need assistance building a print-rich environment for students learning English. After pre-K classes start and teachers gather more information on the needs of individual students, coaches will assist programs in determining how to refine their plans. The DOE will develop concrete instructional and family support resources for programs such as sample standards-based unit plans and extension activities for families. Investments in research, data and program evaluation will enable the DOE to identify trends in how these students are progressing and use those insights to target interventions and supports. The DOE will pursue external partnerships with universities and others, as needed when implementing these strategies.

## **Increasing Quality of All Full-Day Pre-K Seats**

We anticipate fulfilling the vision of high-quality pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-olds in two years, with a significant increase in seats in year one and combination of conversions and newly-created seats each year, across community-based organization and public schools. Ultimately, all families with 4-year-olds who want full-day pre-K will have access to free services with consistent quality standards and support for teachers and administrators. Whether a child participates in a public school, CBO with pre-K, or CBO with other services like Child Care and Head Start, that child will have a free, full day of enriching instruction that prepares him or her for kindergarten and sets him or her on a path toward college and career readiness.

For programs already offering full-day pre-K, we will bring them up to the same quality standards as new programs established through expansion. These include:

- 16,119 full-day seats in public schools
- 3,364 full-day seats in CBOs that contract with the DOE

In year one, we will implement quality enhancements for the 12,681 seats in CBOs that contract with the Administration for Children’s Services through a combination of half-day UPK, Child Care, and Head Start dollars. These will include covering parent fees for the UPK portion of the day (6 hours and 20 minutes, 180 days).

Conversions	New Seats	Enhancements to existing DOE public school or CBO full-day options	Bringing ACS EarlyLearn seats up to new UPK model
27,241	13,845	19,483	12,681

The 13,845 new full-day seats will be spread across public schools and DOE contracted CBOs, with the breakdown between them potentially shifting during expansion. We will know more about specific percentages as we move forward with receiving and reviewing applications from programs in both settings.

	Year 1 (2014 - 2015)	Year 2 (2015 - 2016)	TOTAL
<b>Expansion</b>			
Conversion	11,760	15,481	27,241
New	11,880	1,965	13,845
Bringing existing full-day options up to new quality standard	32,164	COMPLETE	32,164
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55,804</b>	<b>17,446</b>	<b>73,250</b>

The new full-day seats in public schools will include 5 percent of seats for inclusion,<sup>8</sup> and the 128 general education children currently in half-day “Inclusion” programs will be converted to full-day. In addition, to accommodate students with disabilities who may want to participate in pre-K for the second portion of the day after receiving self-contained services, we will convert 877 seats to full-day service.

## Cost Per Child Comparisons

In total, bringing all 73,250 full-day pre-K seats up to the quality standards described below will cost an average of \$10,239 per child.<sup>9</sup> The cost per child required to build a quality model in New York City is roughly comparable to quality programs outside of New York and \$3,032 more than the current city average rate per child. The costs of reaching all 4-year olds with these programs — including expansion costs and ongoing operational costs — total \$340 million annually, of which \$97 million will be dedicated in the first year to start-up infrastructure and costs required to upgrade program quality. As the number of children enrolled increases, expansion costs recede, with \$6 million in expansion costs in year two, and the full funding dedicated to ongoing operations thereafter.

Current average cost/child in NYC	Cost/child with new UPK-NYC	New Jersey Abbott Districts	Washington, D.C.	Connecticut
\$7,207	\$10,239	\$12,800	\$14,000	\$11,725

The city will make the following investments to maximize the number of quality seats offered this September:

1. Create 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);
2. Increase the number of DOE reviewers of pre-K applications – Every proposal will be evaluated by experts who can review written proposals and conduct site visits;
3. Increase the number of DOHMH inspectors – All sites that have submitted quality proposals will receive proper inspections.

## Defining the New Model

The Universal Pre-Kindergarten Planning and Implementation Task Force formed even before Mayor de Blasio took office. It pulled together experts from within and outside of New York City government and researched quality pre-K systems outside of New York to scope out the core features of high-quality models that produce positive learning outcomes. The practices already in place include:

- **Basing all instruction and professional development on state pre-K learning standards**, known as New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core.<sup>10</sup> The city's Department of Education has played a lead role in demonstrating what implementing these standards looks like in the context of developmentally appropriate early learning environments. This past fall, a sample interdisciplinary unit and unit template created by the DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education were disseminated to pre-K programs and higher education early childhood faculty across the state. Additional unit samples are available on the DOE website. These units incorporate themes relevant to young students (e.g., learning modes of transportation, plants). The resources provide flexibility for teachers to develop their own themes, based on students' interests and backgrounds, while also advancing instruction aligned to the standards. The quality improvements build on groundwork laid, but go a step further by providing resources needed to ensure standards are consistently and fully implemented.
- **Supporting programs with on-site instructional coaches, professional development workshops, and resources;**
- **Using valid and reliable tools to examine the quality** of early childhood learning environments and child-teacher interactions to tailor supports and other interventions;
- **Creating a framework for programs to regularly observe and analyze child progress** using observations of children engaging in everyday classroom experiences and to individualize instruction based on those observations;
- **Supporting families with children in public school pre-K** programs by adding additional social workers and reducing caseloads in high-need areas, investing in CBOs to provide similar services, offering guidance for programs on best practices, hosting workshops for parents on building early literacy skills while they read to children, and holding borough-based forums that introduce families with children in public school or CBO pre-K programs to the Common Core curriculum and work with them to support their child's transition to kindergarten.



Since January 1, the DOE, ACS, the working group, and other city agencies have built a high-quality model that includes those components and others that build on the current approach. In developing their approach, city agencies studied a range of dynamic programs across the country, drawing heavily from New Jersey’s Abbott Districts, which are designed to overcome chronic education disparities and shown to have substantial impacts on achievement in language, literacy, and mathematics, reduce grade retention, close the achievement gap between students of different socioeconomic background, and benefit all students in the Abbott districts.<sup>11</sup> Similar to what will be developed in New York City, that model uses on-site teacher coaches with manageable caseloads who provide both on-site support and professional development workshops, as well as valid and reliable tools to monitor program quality.

The model designed for New York City will provide the following to all 4-year-olds:

**1. Six hours and 20 minutes for 180 days of instruction, free;**

**2. Consistent and full implementation of standards-based instruction oriented around the state pre-K learning standards, Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core, covering skills in all areas of development, including:**

- a. Approaches to Learning
- b. Physical Development and Health
- c. Social and Emotional Development
- d. Communication, Language, and Literacy
- e. Cognition and Knowledge of the World

**3. Ensuring recruitment and retention of high-quality UPK lead teachers with early childhood certification;**

Investments in New York City’s early childhood workforce at every stage of their development will ensure all children attending our pre-K programs receive high-quality services that lay the foundation for long-term success. Under the mayor’s plan, pay levels across the system will be sufficient to attract and retain the best certified teachers to lead early childhood classrooms.

**4. Increased support for students whose primary language is not English.**

Given the diversity of our city and that 19 percent of current kindergarteners are English Language Learners,<sup>12</sup> the model will put additional support in place so that teachers, administrators and coaches are prepared to meet their needs. For example, DOE instructional coaches will receive targeted training on supporting students whose native language is not English, which they can turnkey in their ongoing work with programs.

## **5. Increased support for families in high-need areas;**

The model will double down on existing support, with additional resources for CBOs and public schools in high-need areas. In addition to increasing the number of social workers to provide more intensive support for individual schools in high-need areas, programs in community-based settings in high-need areas will receive additional resources to meet the needs of families. This support enable programs to support families transitioning into pre-K and into kindergarten in the following year. DOE will require programs to develop plans for how they will use those funds to tailor family support in ways that meet the needs of their community. Some examples include:

- Developing mechanisms for gathering regular feedback from families on all aspects of programming and using those findings to inform ongoing improvements;
- Creating extended learning activities that provide families with concrete ways to support their children, which build on content covered and instructional practices used within the classroom;
- Establishing partnerships with schools where children will likely attend kindergarten to promote smooth transitions.

## **6. Further developed quality infrastructure within DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education**

Programs will receive more targeted support with an increased number of on-site coaches who will now have fewer classrooms to cover. Teachers, teaching assistants and administrators will attend summer trainings conducted by DOE coaches focused on planning for the year. These coaches will remain in place at schools to provide ongoing and consistent professional development. The DOE will draw from research-based practices in adult learning and early childhood educator development and will engage university partners to support development and execution of the summer sessions. More extensive program evaluation, database development, and research will demonstrate the effects of New York City's UPK program and inform ongoing improvements. The DOE will be able to assess how children, teachers and programs are performing each year and publicly share the trends we are seeing in programs across the city.

## **Efforts Already Underway: Building on Existing Systems and Addressing Gaps**

### **Selection of High-Quality Providers to Offer Maximum Number of Seats**

The administration is using the DOE's established mechanisms for schools and CBOs to apply to select high quality full-day providers. The DOE has a contracting method in place that can handle rapid expansion in CBOs. Providers from all five boroughs may respond to the Request for Proposals (RFP) to offer full-day services starting in September. The RFP was released in mid-December, 2013 and is due February 5. The DOE expects a high turnout of quality proposals. Last year, 190 sites passed the DOE's quality threshold, but only 33 percent of those sites were awarded full-day pre-K, because of limited funding.<sup>13</sup> Assuming that we receive a comparable number of quality proposals this year, plus proposals from additional application rounds, and that additional CBOs can convert half-day seats, CBOs alone would yield close to 20,000 seats. The DOE has developed procedures and materials for a large-scale public school application process. Applications will be released in early February. The DOE will also draw from a pipeline of public school applications from past expansions that did not receive additional full-day pre-K because of limited funding, but met the DOE's quality threshold.

The DOE is prepared to add application rounds as necessary to maximize the number of seats for September and has experience implementing such processes. For the past several years, the DOE has added 1,000 full-day seats in CBOs as late as June, using City Tax Levy and discretionary funding from City Council. Additionally, just one month after the city was awarded funding from the state to start operating additional full-day seats for the current school year, the DOE was able to identify roughly 70 community-based sites across the city and ensure that 2,800 children could participate in full-day classes for the rest of this school year.

### **Outreach to Families to Maximize Enrollment**

The DOE developed a pre-K outreach campaign over the past two years to make families aware of their options. These efforts range from subway and bus advertisements, to a texting campaign, to boots on the ground canvassing in high-need areas, to the cultivation of partnerships with local organizations that can help spread the word. The DOE also has a partnership with the New York City Housing Authority that enables DOE to send direct mailings and automated calls to more than 3,000 families in public housing developments with eligible 4-year-olds.<sup>14</sup> The DOE is prepared to activate and expand this campaign in the coming months.

The DOE will create more formal procedures for waitlist management to ensure all families that want a seat can find a full-day option that meets their needs. In the spring, DOE will launch a family survey to better understand family preferences to inform future outreach planning and ongoing program improvements.

## Identification of Space

The additional seats would require around 2,000 more classrooms and lead teachers, to be offered in public schools and community-based settings across the city. Roughly 26,000 seats would be converted from half-day to full-day, with an additional 14,000 created. Conversions typically require half the number of additional classrooms as newly created full-day seats, assuming teachers are serving children in a morning and afternoon session already.

Per state regulations, each classroom will have a ratio of 18 children to 2 adults (typically a lead teacher and a teaching assistant). Classes may go up to 20 students, but any classroom larger than 18 students requires three adults.

The Department of Education has identified roughly 4,000 classrooms potentially available within public school buildings, with additional space likely available in community-based organizations that currently serve the majority of children in pre-K.<sup>15</sup>

The DOE currently offers mostly half-day pre-K at 500 community-based sites. This week, the Department of Education will launch a survey to assess their ability to expand. Results from the survey will be completed by February and will identify additional space for pre-K expansion.

The city has also started exploring the availability of space in other city-owned properties with the Economic Development Corporation, space in branches of the New York Public Library, and others to secure additional space as needed.

## Development of a High-Quality Teacher Pipeline

Typically, about 2,000 early childhood certified teachers apply for positions at the Department of Education each year.<sup>16</sup> With new momentum around pre-K expansion, the administration anticipates an increase in early childhood certified teacher applications, creating an even deeper pool of teacher talent to meet the needs of expansion.

Last year, the DOE established a way for CBO programs to access a pool of teachers who apply to the DOE and express an interest in teaching in CBO settings. This year, DOE will make that tool more helpful to directors and principals by providing pre-K specific guidance for selecting high quality teachers. The DOE will also expand its partnerships with universities to recruit undergraduates working toward early childhood certification.

The DOE is prepared to ensure these teachers are prepared, starting with a 5-day summer training focused on implementing the pre-K learning standards using developmen-

tally appropriate instruction and engaging families in support of children’s learning. The team that supports teachers and programs on an ongoing basis is also creating a full-day pre-K toolkit with concrete resources, such as sample schedules and guidance on how teachers and assistants can maximize time spent throughout the day while meeting the developmental needs of young children.

Our city has laid the groundwork for rapid and significant full-day pre-K expansion. The adults have come together to do what’s right for kids — all kids — in this moment. We identified core features of a quality model that provides clear expectations, supports educators working hard every day with children and families, and ensures mechanisms are in place to advance quality in the short and long term. These efforts cannot happen with a phased-in approach. To build a system — one cohesive system — that maximizes participation in high-quality, full-day pre-K —we need to properly resource all aspects of that system, from the salaries for certified teachers to data analysis for strategically allocating seats and tailoring professional development to the coaches that will provide professional development and on-site support. Our city agencies cannot build out that system and fulfill our promise to all families with 4-year-olds without securing the funding necessary now, with assurances that funding will continue at that level for years to come.

## Endnotes:

1. Figures are based on the number of children enrolled in district and charter school kindergarten (81,748), minus the estimated number of children who will require full-day pre-K in a non-public setting (8,498), as documented on his/her individualized education program (IEP). The DOE will adjust these figures and programming as necessary over time to ensure that all children receive appropriate services.
2. Growth from 19,483 (current full-day) to 55,804 (final 2014-2015 full-day).
3. All current city pre-K capacity numbers are based on unaudited New York City Department of Education figures, as of December 5, 2013.
4. Public School pre-K settings are pre-K programs within district public elementary schools. In these settings, the principal oversees the pre-K program. There are approximately 570 public schools with pre-K across the five boroughs.
5. DOE CBOs are community-based organizations that contract directly with the city's Department of Education to offer pre-K services. There are approximately 500 sites with these contracts across the five boroughs.
6. ACS CBOs are community-based organizations that provide pre-K under contract with ACS, using funding from the SED Universal Pre-Kindergarten grant. These sites offer additional services to children, using Child Care and Head Start funding. The DOE retains programmatic oversight of this portion of programming for these sites. There are approximately 350 such sites across the five boroughs.
7. Figures based on the 2012 Audited Register.
8. Inclusion in this sense means integrated co-teaching, or ICT classes, for those children whose Individual Education Plans (IEPs) recommend such a setting. While the special education seats in these classes are paid for with a separate funding source, since they are integrated, each of these classes includes 10-12 UPK seats.
9. Includes \$9,077 for quality rate without DOE operational costs. Additional DOE public school operational costs include \$131 for food, \$209 for facilities, \$87 for energy, \$45 for leases, \$190 for administration and support, and \$501 for debt service.
10. These standards were adopted and approved by the New York State Board of Regents in January 2011. They describe the skills and knowledge children should develop by the end of their pre-K year. They cover all areas of development and include math and literacy standards aligned to K-12 Common Core Standards. The DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education began implementing the standards shortly after the Board of Regents approved them.
11. W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D. et al, "Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow-Up," National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013.
12. Figures based on the 2012 Audited Register.
13. Based on DOE analysis of unaudited data.
14. These 3,000 families were located in targeted high-need areas. DOE, in partnership with NYCHA, could expand the number of households included for future enrollment periods.
15. The preliminary assessment is based on facilities information from the 2012-2013 Annual Facilities Survey only, which is filled out by principals yearly.
16. Based on the past two years of data from the DOE. These applicants have a birth-2 early childhood certification.