

Philadelphia Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Executive Summary

April 15th, 2016



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Philadelphia is a more diverse, safe, educated, and thriving city than it has been in decades. But its potential for future progress will be held back until all children, regardless of race, ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds are ready to succeed in school.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten programs can make it happen. In the long term, the programs result in fewer children in special education classes, higher graduation rates, increased earning potential, better health, and narrowing the achievement gap rooted in income and other environmental factors. Quality Pre-K programs also have been shown to support parents' efforts to enter into and thrive in the workforce. The benefits ripple through the workforce, economy, and community. Yet only one in three of Philadelphia's 42,500 three- and four-year-olds have access to affordable quality Pre-K.

On May 19, 2015, Philadelphians voted overwhelmingly (80 percent) to create the Philadelphia Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Its charge: propose a universal Pre-K program that provides quality, affordable, and accessible services to three- and four-year-olds throughout Philadelphia. The Commission was tasked with providing recommendations for sustainable funding for Pre-K *that does not reduce existing K–12 funding*.

Beginning work on June 30, 2015, the 17-member Commission reviewed the current state of early learning in Philadelphia. It found a sizable gap between the current situation and the basic requirements for quality Pre-K—in particular, a gap in funding and coordination. While the estimated cost of quality Pre-K is between \$14,000 and \$15,000 per child for full day, full year care, current funding is well below that. Insufficient resources limit the ability to provide the basic tenets of quality Pre-K: a stable workforce with appropriate credentials and compensation, quality facilities in convenient locations, and funding for families who cannot otherwise afford quality Pre-K.

The Commission reviewed scientific research, evidence-based practices, and current local and state efforts. It garnered input from experts in the field, and over 450 members of the public, through multiple hearings, community meetings, roundtable discussions, an online survey, and emailed feedback.

Recommendations

The Commission recommends the following:

- I. Philadelphia's Pre-K program be delivered in settings that meet rigorous quality standards or are growing into quality, are monitored for quality by external observers, conduct regular child assessment, and report on outcomes. (*See 'Quality Expectations,' pg. 24*)
- II. The City's Pre-K program develop and oversee the management of expanded quality Pre-K using a mixed-delivery system that partners with community-based child care centers, group, family, and school-based programs that meet quality standards or are growing into quality programs. (*See 'Mixed Delivery System,' pg. 25*)

- III. The expanded Pre-K system is available to all three- and four-year-olds in Philadelphia, with priority given to children in neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of poverty, children at highest risk of poor academic and life outcomes, and areas with a shortage of quality Pre-K slots. *(See 'Populations Served,' pg. 25)*
- IV. A universal plan for Pre-K that begins with a targeted approach. *(See 'Universal System,' pg. 26)*
- V. The City oversee the creation of an expanded Pre-K program that would enable subsidy-eligible children to participate all day (eight hours or more per day) throughout the year (260 days per year). *(See 'Dosage,' pg. 28)*
- VI. Philadelphia Pre-K program include a variety of child care models, including center-based, group, family, and school-based settings that meet or are moving to embrace the standard for quality. *(See 'Child Care Settings,' pg. 28)*
- VII. The City leverage, streamline and organize resources to enable providers to layer funding from more than one public source (Head Start, Pre-K Counts, local Pre-K funding, CCIS). This will help ensure that children can be in care a minimum eight hours a day, 260 days a year and provide resources to cover the full cost of quality for those families that qualify. *(See 'Layered Funding,' pg. 29)*
- VIII. Philadelphia's Pre-K system use curricula that have been approved by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) that meet the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. *(See 'Curriculum,' pg. 29)*
- IX. The Commission recommends the following strategies for 'Child Outcomes and Assessment', *(see pg. 30)*
 - a. Philadelphia's Pre-K plan tie child assessment and outcomes reporting to Pennsylvania's existing system and avoid duplication of efforts by providers or monitors.
 - b. The City work with OCDEL to streamline assessment and reporting requirements across all quality Pre-K programs regardless of funding source.
- X. Philadelphia's Pre-K program use the monitoring system that exists for Pre-K Counts. The City should explore with OCDEL whether it is possible to use Pre-K Counts program monitors for the locally-funded cohort. This should entail receiving regular monitoring reports from the state. *(See 'Program Monitoring,' pg. 31)*
- XI. The Commission recommends the following strategies for 'Quality Improvement' *(see pg. 31)*
 - a. The implementation plan direct significant City resources, leverage existing support programs, and work with philanthropy and higher education to make new investments to expand quality improvement resources to increase the number of providers in STARS and for providers to move up the ladder.

- b. After changes are made to streamline Keystone STARS, the City work with state partners to look at requiring all programs that receive federal, state, and local investment to participate in Keystone STARS.
- XII. The City encourage the development and adoption of an equitable and comprehensive approach to kindergarten transition that delineates clear expectations for all Pre-K providers, K–3 schools, and other organizations to support children in making a successful transition to kindergarten. (*See 'Kindergarten Transition,' pg. 32*)
- XIII. The Commission recommends the following strategies for 'Workforce Development' (*see pg. 32*)
 - a. The Pre-K program maximize use of the existing early childhood workforce development system and resources to meet professional development requirements to adequately prepare Pre-K teachers. As part of this support, it should work to increase utilization of existing academic advisors by child care professionals.
 - b. Release of City Pre-K funding to providers should be contingent on compliance with salary scales that provide teachers with appropriate compensation.
 - c. The City of Philadelphia work with OCDEL to make accommodations to include teachers who are working to obtain required degrees and credentials to serve in quality child care programs while expanded Pre-K is being phased in order to promote equity and inclusion.
 - d. The City's Pre-K program work with stakeholders such as institutions of higher education, providers, and advocates to ensure that teacher preparation programs provide the necessary skills for practitioners to be effective teachers.
- XIV. The creation of a governance board to oversee the Pre-K program's receipt and distribution of funding to providers and oversee the implementation of Philadelphia's Pre-K program to ensure a fair and equitable system. (*See 'Governance and Organizational Structure,' see pg. 36*)
- XV. The City fund quality Pre-K slots for the traditional six-hour school day and 180-day school year at \$8,500 per slot. This proposed per child rate should match the state Pre-K Counts rate. (*See 'Local Pre-K Funding Model,' pg. 39*)
- XVI. The Commission recommends the following strategies for 'Revenue to Fund Pre-K' (*see pg. 43*)
 - a. City Council and the Mayor consider the following options as potential funding sources: Property Tax, Wage Tax, Sales Tax, Use & Occupancy Tax, Cigarette Tax, Liquor Tax, Parking Tax, and Sugary Drink Tax.
 - b. A majority of the Commission (13 of 17, with one abstention) recommend that the City (City Council and the Mayor) support the Sugar Drink Tax as a possible funding source to support Pre-K.
 - c. The Commission unanimously recommends that the Mayor and the City Council work together to identify sufficient funding to support the Pre-K program recommended herein regardless of the funding source.

- XVII. The Commission recommends the following strategies for the ‘Process for Developing the Implementation Plan’ (*see pg. 47*)
- a. The Mayor’s Office of Education develop a detailed implementation plan guided by the Commission’s recommendations for expanded Pre-K, pending the concurrence of City Council.
 - b. The plan be developed transparently and in partnership with child care providers including directors, teachers and staff, and parents.
 - c. The implementation plan be presented to the wider community for public feedback; this includes parents, providers, businesses and community members.

The Commission presents these recommendations to Mayor Jim Kenney and City Council for review and discussion.

The recommendations represent nine months of research, policy development and robust public dialogue by the Philadelphia Commission on Universal Pre-K and its staff. The Commission presented a Draft Report on February 2, 2016 to the Mayor and City Council for review. In addition to public discussion prior to the release of the draft report, the Commission convened a public hearing and conducted more than ten neighborhood meetings with those who would be most impacted by this plan, including low-income parents, teachers, community members and child care providers. The Commission then revised the plan based on the feedback.

Pre-K is a smart investment in growing minds and preparing children to be skilled learners at the time when they are primed for it. If done right, expanding Pre-K will provide deep and lasting benefits for the families and residents of Philadelphia.