



New York

Universal Pre-kindergarten

New York funds two pre-kindergarten programs. The Targeted Pre-kindergarten Program (TPK) is a primarily half-day program similar to Head Start, and is not profiled in this summary. The Universal Pre-kindergarten program (UPK) is open to all 4-year-olds regardless of income or family risk factors in certain areas of the state. Local school districts administer the programs and must sub-contract at least 10 percent of funds to community-based providers.

Eligibility

Income: none

Age: 4 years old by a locally-determined date between December 1 and December 31

Priority: none

Length of Program

Hours/day: two and a half hours per day, five days per week for part-day programs; five hours per day, five days per week for full-day programs. Most children (80 percent) are in part-day programs.

Days/year: 180 days

Eligible Providers

Local school districts in designated areas of the state, representing 30 percent of all school districts. Ten percent of funds must go to sub-contracts with Head Start, private child care providers, or other community-based organizations.

Number Served¹

58,316 (2002-03): 21,458 in public schools and 36,858 in community-based settings

Total Annual Budget

\$195,363,596 (2002-03)

Monitoring

The New York Department of Education has authority over program and fiscal monitoring of local school districts. Local school districts monitor their contracts with community-based providers. UPK programs in public schools are monitored in the same manner as K-12 programs. When evaluating applications from community agencies, school districts must ensure that they are in compliance with health and safety codes and licensing requirements. Programs must meet the procedures and requirements set forth in the UPK regulations.

¹ For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

Governance

How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?

School districts must contract a minimum of 10 percent of programs funds to eligible community agencies. School districts can negotiate contracts where they keep some funding for specified services such as bulk purchasing and/or to provide professional development. There is no state regulation of how the money flows from schools to community agencies. In Syracuse, for example, the district reserves funding for professional development activities (participation is required for all UPK teachers), supplies, consumables, and instructional materials. The district also hires program visitors, staff developers, nurses, and child psychologists who are on call.

Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?

Decisions about partnerships with community-based programs are made at the district level. Prior to requesting UPK funds from the state, each district must convene a pre-kindergarten policy advisory board appointed by the superintendent to make an initial recommendation to the board of education as to whether the district should implement a pre-kindergarten program. The advisory board must include, but is not limited to: members of the board of education, teachers employed by the school district as selected by the collective bargaining unit, parents of children who attend schools in the district, community leaders, and child care and early education providers. Each advisory board must hold at least one public hearing that provides for the participation of parents, school personnel, child care providers and other interested members of the community prior to determining what recommendation it will make to the Board of Education. If the advisory board determines that it will recommend the implementation of a pre-kindergarten program in the district, it must develop a program plan.

There is no requirement to integrate pre-k and child care at the state level; the Department of Education has sole responsibility for administering the program. However, a UPK external workgroup did convene prior to implementation of the program, and was influential in developing the UPK regulations in the first year. This group comprised a broad array of stakeholders, including representatives from business, labor, child care providers, advocates, special education, and administrators from the departments of education and human services. The group is less active now that policies are in place, but has been influential in efforts to keep funding in recent years.

Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?

School districts select their community-based partners through a competitive process. Each district develops its own process, and must make efforts to ensure that all eligible community-based agencies are aware of the process. Community agencies submit proposals, and school districts make selections using the following criteria: the agency's capacity to effectively, efficiently, and immediately provide needed services; the agency's proposal to meet the goals and objectives of the district's pre-kindergarten program plan; the ease of utilization and

accessibility of the program to parents; capacity to provide ongoing staff development; staffing patterns and qualifications; documentation that all applicable health and safety codes and licensure or registration requirements are met; anticipated fiscal share and other resources that contribute to the UPK program; current program design and experience in providing developmentally-appropriate programs; fiscal solvency; stability of staff; articulated mission/philosophy statements; record management and documentation procedures followed by the agency; administrative structure; capacity and experience in serving children with disabilities; and capacity and experience in serving children and their parents when they are limited English proficient. Although site visits are not required by the state as part of the application process, districts are strongly encouraged to visit programs. Program standards are required prior to entering into a contract.

What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?

Funds for classroom equipment, supplies, books, and/or curriculum development are allowable expenses under the UPK grant. Districts may also use UPK funds to award start up funding with a first time award of a pre-kindergarten classroom.

Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?

This is a local decision. Typically, teachers in community-based settings with the same credential earn lower wages than teachers in school-based programs.

Supports for Working Families

Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?

Yes, guidance to local advisory boards states: “Programs shall be...designed to: ...meet the needs of parents of eligible children including, but not limited to, children who require full-day programs due to a family’s employment and/or pursuits of additional training or education.” However, limited funding restricts what programs can do to be responsive.

For the 1999-2000 school year through the 2001-02 school year only, the UPK statute was amended to require that each district implementing UPK give preference in enrollment to children who are economically disadvantaged. When this amendment was allowed to sunset, districts became prohibited from giving any enrollment preference. They can, however, give preference to funding community-based programs that meet the needs of low-income families (i.e., full-day Head Start or child care centers).

What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?

Grant funds may be used for transportation.

Funding

What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?

Districts initially received between \$2,000 and \$4,000 per child based on a formula. The formula takes into consideration factors such as district wealth, free and reduced lunch ratio, and extraordinary needs. The funding comes in the form of a categorical grant, and districts have discretion on how it is distributed.

How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?

UPK funding may reduce the child care subsidy amount, but parent co-pays will not change. UPK funding can reduce the subsidy amount if the hours of care outside of UPK are less than 30 per week. For example, if a family requires 45 hours of care and receives 12.5 hours of UPK, it still receives the full subsidy amount. Families receiving less than 30 hours of child care may have their subsidy pro-rated.

UPK funding does not change Head Start funding, but the amount of UPK funding a Head Start center receives can vary based on the individual contract with the school district. Some programs can receive both a full Head Start and UPK reimbursement if they extend their current 3.5-hour day with an additional 2.5 UPK-funded hours. A second model is for Head Start programs to receive UPK funds to serve more children. A third model is for Head Start programs to receive funds to serve the same children in an enhanced setting (i.e., using the additional funds to pay for a teacher with a Bachelor's degree). The amount of the UPK supplement is at the discretion of the local school board.

Sources

- Interview: 03/22/2004, Dee Dwyer, NYSED; 03/22/2004, Shirley Jung, Rochester City School District; 04/15/2004 Christine Vogelsang, Syracuse City School District
- Website: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/upk.html>
- Legislation: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/upk%20Educ%20Law%203602-e.html>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/UPK/UPK%20regs.doc>

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.