

Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign



Pre-K Legislative Ask Talking Points for Meetings

SUPPORT FULL-DAY PRE-K

Support the \$25M Full-day Pre-K initiative included in the Executive Budget.

- This new funding is a significant next step to all children having access to high-quality, full-day prekindergarten, starting with highest need students first.
- Pre-K works: Children that attend prekindergarten are more likely to stay in school, graduate, go to college, not get involved in delinquent activities, and get higher paying jobs as adults.
- Lack of a full-day option has kept many children from attending Pre-K.
- Also makes a commitment to quality with a focus on certified teachers, quality learning environments and effective teaching.
- New funding comes at an important time for the state, just as President Obama is making early learning a priority for his administration.

Support making the new full-day Pre-K initiative a permanent part of state Pre-K aid, with a plan to increase the program over time.

- This new funding for full day Pre-K should become permanent so school districts can adequately plan from year to year.
- Add the \$25 Million for full-day Pre-K to the base UPK aid to provide the same security for full-day funding to awarded districts.
- Without this security, these funds will be a temporary appropriation.

Make sure new full-day Pre-K aid includes the same requirement for 10% investment in community-based programs as existing Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) does.

- State UPK aid requires that 10% of funding be invested into community-based programs.
- That investment expands capacity and leverages expertise and other investments in early childhood education, such as child care, Head Start and Preschool Special Education.
- Many UPK programs located in community-based organizations offer extended hours for working parents.
- Over 50% of current UPK funding is used to support pre-k programs located in community-based organizations.

Do not penalize schools for fluctuations in four-year-old populations

- The current language in the law states that "a school district shall not reduce its total number of pre-kindergarten placements".
- Because year-to-year enrollments change due to changes in the population, this provision has unintended consequences and needs to be changed.

- School districts should not be **ineligible** for Pre-K funding because there are fewer four-year-olds who apply one year than there were in the prior year.

Support the quality component in the new full-day Pre-K program with an intentional strategy and investment of resources.

- The new full-day program includes significant benchmarks for quality, known to help produce better outcomes for children, including certified teachers, research-based programs and effective teaching.
- Meeting those benchmarks requires supports such as technical assistance and professional development as well as curricula development, data collection, and student and program assessment.
- Support a designation of \$2 million for those components, to align them with QUALITYstarsNY and support all participating service providers in meeting the quality benchmarks of the new full-day Pre-K program.

PROTECT UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN FUNDING

Protect the current \$385 million investment in UPK, using the same policy framework afforded to the new full-day Pre-K program.

- UPK has lost ground, dropping from \$452M just four years ago to \$385M this year – a \$67M loss in funding for early childhood education.
- The loss was due primarily because the state returned all unused allocations to the state’s general fund, rather than reallocating the funding to other districts to fill additional pre-k slots, both half and full day, in the subsequent year.
- The State should work toward addressing the long-term issues in Pre-K financing to ensure that districts are better able to utilize the funding. But in the meantime, the state should extend the same protection to UPK funding, that it has to the new \$25 million program.
- UPK protection language should be added to the Article VII and appropriations bill.

PROTECT ACCESS TO KINDERGARTEN SERVICES

Adequately and equitably fund K-12 education aid to prevent districts from reducing access to Kindergarten for five-year-olds.

- The current fiscal climate is creating severe threats to these critically important components of the State’s P-12 education system.
- A growing number of districts around the state are putting cuts to Kindergarten on the table – cutting back full-day to half-day or eliminating Kindergarten altogether.