

Fully Fund Pre-K for All New York's Children

Nearly 77,000 four-year-olds still lack full-day pre-K that state leaders promised. Protect and build on the state's current \$857.2 million investment in pre-K. Include appropriate resources to support each child, including those with developmental delays and disabilities, emergent multi-lingual learners and those who are homeless.

Invest \$770 million to expand access to quality full day pre-K for all children in the state. Funding for the next pre-K expansion should include enhanced rates to meet quality standards. This includes an additional 20% set aside to support highly qualified and appropriately compensated teachers in both community programs and public schools.

New York State currently invests \$857.2 million to provide a combination of half- and full-day pre-K for three- and four-year-olds. Early on, in 1997, New York's leaders promised every preschooler a seat. In 2014, Governor Cuomo doubled down on the promise, with a commitment to *full-day* pre-K for every four-year-old. In 2015, he added three-year-olds. But today, only New York City has Pre-K for All four-year-olds, and the state's investment slowed to a trickle, leaving tens of thousands of children behind. The evidence shows pre-K is not only one of the most effective educational strategies for addressing inequality, it is also one of the best ways to ensure that parents and guardians can be part of the workforce. Children who attend pre-K are more likely to be reading on grade level, graduate high school and go on to college, when pre-K is coupled with continued investment in the K-12 world. Every year that goes by, the state is forgoing \$3 to \$7 for every dollar spent in return on investment. Every year, the state spends an enormous amount of funding in special education, in remediation, and in incarceration, all of which are decreased when children have access to a quality full day pre-K program. By providing at least \$10,000 per child to all districts that need to implement pre-K, the state can begin to ensure that children are put on a path of success early on.

Invest \$5 million to establish Regional Technical Assistance Centers

The state must also establish three Regional Early Learning Technical Assistance Centers to support the roll-out of quality early childhood education, to support districts without dedicated early childhood coordinators and strengthen collaboration and partnerships between public schools and early childhood programs in the community. This proposal is supported by the Regents Early Childhood Workgroup's Blue Ribbon Committee.

Increase funding for preschool special education programs

Preschool special education programs provide high-quality education services to preschool students with significant developmental delays and disabilities. Inadequate State funding over the years has forced dozens of programs to close and led to a shortage of seats in these programs, leaving preschool children with disabilities without the services they need and have a right to receive. The pandemic has only added financial challenges that have made it even harder for these programs to continue operating.

To ensure that preschool special education programs stay open and can provide high-quality services, **the State must increase the reimbursement rate by at least 10%**. In the five years before the pandemic, the State approved only a 2% increase in the reimbursement rates for preschool special education classes each year and provided no cost of living adjustment to these programs for the previous 6 years, so a significant investment is needed.

To maintain sufficient funding going forward, we also support the Board of Regents' proposals for the State to provide at least the same percentage increase in funding to preschool special education programs as it gives to K-12 public schools each year and to dedicate \$1.25 million to design a new rate-setting methodology, with stakeholder input, to update the way payment is calculated.

Fully Fund School Aid for K-12

Pre-K must be followed by a continuum of quality education to prepare children for college and careers. **No longer should children enter kindergarten to find their schools chronically underfunded in a way that perpetuates educational racism and chronic inequities.**

The Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for College Campaign sees child care and pre-K as companion investments and fully supports the agenda for child care and home visitation developed by Empire State Child Care Campaign and the Winning Beginning NY coalition.