

# New York City Pre-K for All<sup>1</sup>

## Background

New York City pre-K expands on New York state's Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK) in order to achieve universal full-day pre-K for four-year-olds in the city. New York City's pre-K expansion (Pre-K for All) began in the 2014-15 school year, and as of the 2015-16 school year, about 70 percent of all four-year-olds in the city participated in full-day pre-K in schools or community-based centers.<sup>2</sup>

## How is the pre-K program financed?

New York City funds Pre-K for All through a mix of state grants (78 percent), city tax levy (21 percent) and federal grants (1 percent).<sup>3</sup> The city has a mixed delivery model: in addition to classrooms in traditional public schools and pre-K centers (dedicated pre-K facilities operated and led by the New York City public school system), nonprofits and private organizations contract with the city to deliver pre-K services.

New York state UPK funds were also supplemented in 2015 by a federal Preschool Development Grant.

## What is the current status of city efforts toward compensation improvement for pre-K teachers?

**Salary:** Pre-K teachers in New York City public schools are part of the city teacher's union and are paid according to the same salary scale; in contrast, pre-K teachers in community-based organizations are either unrepresented or members of a union representing staff in child care centers.<sup>4</sup> The focus in New York City is currently on narrowing the substantial salary gap between pre-K teachers in school districts and pre-K teachers in community-based organizations, rather than achieving parity.

**Benefits:** New York City Department of Education does not track benefits information for its contracted pre-K providers.

**Payment for Professional Responsibilities:** Opportunities to participate in professional learning and coaching are available to all pre-K sites<sup>5</sup> and are founded on evidence-based research for best practices in early childhood education, rather than being set comparably to the supports that K-12 teachers receive.

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<sup>1</sup> All information in this profile comes from interview data, unless otherwise specified. Personal communication with Josh Wallack and Sophia Pappas, New York City Department of Education, December 2016 (Follow-up: August 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See page 8 of Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Weisenfeld, G.G., Horowitz, M., Kasmin, R., & Squires, J.H. (2017). *The State of Preschool 2016: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

<sup>3</sup> Data for the 2016-17 school year.

<sup>4</sup> Barnett, W.S., Weisenfeld, G.G., Brown, K., Squires, J., & Horowitz, M. (2016). *Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: A State and Local Policy Scan*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research; Potter, H. (2015). *Lessons from New York City's Universal Pre-K Expansion: How a focus on diversity could make it even better*. New York, NY: The Century Foundation. Retrieved from [https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/production.tcf.org/app/uploads/2015/05/13222611/TCF\\_LessonsFromNYCUniversalPreK-11.pdf](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/production.tcf.org/app/uploads/2015/05/13222611/TCF_LessonsFromNYCUniversalPreK-11.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department of Education. (n.d.). *Professional Learning*. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/educators/pd.htm>; see also Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.). *Evaluation of the New York City Pre-K for All Initiative, 2014-15 — Implementation Study Report: Program Supports*. New York, NY: New York City Center for Economic Opportunity and the New York City Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/slidercontent/IndependentResearch.htm>.

## What was the rationale for taking forward the issue of pay parity?

Teacher recruitment was the key consideration. The need for greater comparability between pre-K teacher salaries in school districts and community-based settings was apparent from the initial roll-out of the Pre-K for All expansion in 2014-15.

The rapid expansion depended on increasing availability of pre-K in community-based settings, which required recruiting teachers with bachelor's degrees to work in those settings.

## What was the approach/strategy for moving toward parity?

Beginning in the first year of the roll-out, funds were added to raise the starting salary for certified pre-K teachers in community-based settings to \$44,000 (bachelor's) and \$50,000 (master's), which was about \$6,000 less than the starting salaries of district teachers with equivalent levels of education. In the second year of the program, an additional incentive program was established to aid recruitment and retention in community-based settings.

Funds for those incentives were set at roughly \$2,500 to aid with initial recruitment of certified teachers and \$3,500 for retention of certified lead teachers when they chose to remain at the same contracted provider from one year to the next.<sup>6</sup> Crucially, these funds are not simply part of the general cost per child set out in contracts; they are earmarked specifically for the purposes outlined and cannot be used to pay for the base salary of the teacher.

## What has been helpful in moving these efforts along?

Interviewees framed their goals in terms of an emphasis on teacher quality and the role of adequate compensation in recruiting and retaining skilled teachers.

## What positive outcomes have been seen as a result of the push toward parity?

New York City pre-K representatives expressed the view that efforts to raise salaries for pre-K teachers in community-based settings aided the separate effort by the city's child care union to increase compensation for certified ECE teachers outside pre-K to the same salary level as that of certified pre-K teachers in community-based settings.<sup>7</sup>

## What has been challenging about these efforts?

Interviewees noted that the current approach is not a complete solution to the challenge of recruiting and retaining talented teachers in all settings. Although the majority of site leaders surveyed in the Year One evaluation reported that staff recruitment and retention did not pose significant challenges, community-based site leaders were more likely to report challenges than leaders in district schools and pre-K centers.<sup>8</sup> The persistent salary gap has been a source of contention for community-based providers<sup>9</sup> and has received additional attention as a four-year expansion of the pre-K program to all three-year-olds, 3-K for All, is now in its first year.<sup>10</sup>

6 See also New York City Department of Education website. (n.d.). *Educators: Lead Teacher Incentive Program*. Retrieved from <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/educators/LeadTeacherIncentive.htm>.

7 See also City of New York. (2016). *City applauds contract agreement between District Council 1707 and the Day Care Council of NY*. Retrieved from <http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/778-16/city-applauds-contract-agreement-between-district-council-1707-the-day-care-council-ny>.

8 Gonser, S. (2017). Can private Pre-K for All providers survive in New York City? *The Hechinger Report*. Retrieved from <http://hechingerreport.org/can-private-pre-k-providers-survive-new-york-city/>; Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.).

9 Westat, Metis Associates, & Branch Associates. (n.d.).

10 Taylor, K. (2017). Is "3-K for All" Good for All? De Blasio's Preschool Plan Troubles Some. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/nyregion/free-preschool-deblasio-new-york-city.html>.