



READY TO LAUNCH: PROGRESS REPORT ON PROGRAM AND SPACE APPLICATION

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WITH RECOGNITION TO:

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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THE UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN IMPLEMENTATION WORKING GROUP

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I. Executive Summary

Since the release of the “Ready to Launch” plan in January, the city has made significant progress toward the goals of creating thousands of additional free, full-day pre-kindergarten seats, and creating the systems needed to raise quality throughout the system. In short, the city is on track to fulfill the promise of enabling each family of a 4-year-old to access high-quality, full-day free pre-kindergarten, if the resources are there to fund it.

While many speculated about the city’s ability to ramp up quickly, the city went out to public school principals and community-based organizations, and asked them to propose ambitious but realistic plans for expansion in the next year. As part of these applications, schools and CBOs must identify space for the program and put forth a comprehensive plan for ramping up for September – including how they will identify, train and support their teaching staff. Many organizations that applied already provide some UPK; and all programs, starting from the time of application, must meet and sustain rigorous quality standards. Teams of DOE staff have begun reviewing written applications and sites to ensure any program serving 4-year-olds delivers high quality service.

Together, public school principals and community-based organizations from roughly 930 sites¹ proposed creating more than 29,000 new seats – 8,000 more than needed to meet the “Ready to Launch” targets for September 2014. Furthermore, the Department of Education (DOE) plans to run additional solicitations throughout the year. While the city must complete the review of these proposals to ensure that they meet quality standards, and that the space they propose to use is suitable and sustainable, these results give reason for strong confidence in the city’s ability to achieve the plan’s goals on the proposed timeline.

Leaders on the ground, in public schools and community-based organizations have put forth proposals for services to be offered in classrooms starting this September.

Community-Based Organizations

CBOs submitted proposals for 647 sites, representing approximately 20,000 potential new and converted full-day seats. We have received proposals from neighborhoods across the city in all five boroughs from organizations as diverse as the city they’re proposing to serve. Our call for truly universal pre-K has elicited a truly universal response.

In addition to the RFP, the DOE surveyed 507 existing UPK CBO providers with DOE contracts to gauge interest and capacity for providing full-day pre-K this fall. Preliminary estimates suggest that the DOE could potentially secure 6,000-8,000 more seats by engaging half-day UPK providers from survey respondents who did not submit an RFP. To further expand the CBO pool, the city will survey an additional 350 sites that offer part-day UPK with Child Care and Head Start through an EarlyLearn contract with the Administration for Children’s Services this week.

Public Schools

The day after Mayor de Blasio laid out his pre-K plan before the New York State Legislature's joint budget hearing, Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña sent a memo to all principals, encouraging them to apply. Within two weeks, roughly 280 elementary school principals expressed interest. During informational calls led by the DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education, principals expressed excitement for supporting implementation, given high demand for full-day pre-K in their communities.

As with the CBO RFP, the public schools in our application pipeline come from communities across all five boroughs, surpass our responses from last year, and include enough seats to meet Year 1 public school targets. Based on results of the public school application survey, schools are proposing roughly 9,000 new and converted full-day seats.

New York City's universal pre-K plan, at its core, is about ensuring all children across the city have access to high quality full-day pre-K. Quality is essential and non-negotiable. Our children and our city deserve more than just access to *any* pre-K program. They and their families deserve an enriching and welcoming learning environment, in which children actively explore, discover, make friends, use new vocabulary in meaningful ways, develop foundational literacy and math skills, and think critically to solve problems. The selection of high quality pre-K providers with space to accommodate students is therefore a pivotal driver of successful implementation.

Our emphasis on quality means that not all applicants will be accepted. That said, between the 29,000 seats proposed through the CBO and public school application processes and 6,000-8,000 additional seats identified through the DOE space survey, we will meet September targets, even if not all applicants are approved or some applicants receive fewer seats than requested. DOE is prepared to run an additional CBO mini-solicitation this spring and additional public school application rounds, as has been done in the past.ⁱⁱ

The number of programs and classrooms needed to support citywide expansion of full-day pre-K is no longer an abstract number of potential classrooms. Leaders on the ground, in public schools, and community-based organizations have put forth proposals for services to be offered in classrooms starting this September. Current estimates put New York City well on its way toward meeting Year 1 targets; and we have the time and infrastructure needed for securing additional providers and space, if needed.

II. Background

The following paper outlines specifics on benchmarks met through our CBO RFP and public school application processes.ⁱⁱⁱ

“Ready to Launch:” Key Features of the UPK-NYC Plan

- 73,250 4-year-olds to be served, up from 20,000 receiving full-day pre-K currently
- High quality options for families in public schools and community-based organizations
- By September 2014: 53,604 full-day UPK, with 6 hours and 20 minutes free for families, up from 20,000 currently
- A total of ~70,000 children will have access to full-day or half-day pre-K in Year 1, up from 59,000 currently
- All existing full-day seats brought up to new quality model
- Average cost per child increased from \$7,207 to \$10,239, a 42 percent increase
- More targeted and intensive support for teachers, assistants and administrators, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of students learning English
- Quality standards focused on children developing foundational language, literacy, cognitive, social, and physical skills reflected in the state pre-K learning standards
- Increased support for families in high-need areas

III. CBO RFP and Space/Interest Survey

Shortly after the mayor took office, DOE held informational sessions for CBO providers. CBOs from across the city received a clear message: If you have the capacity to provide high quality full-day pre-K and are interested in starting to offer those services to children and families starting this September, you should apply. On the February 18 deadline, hundreds of providers responded to that call by bringing application packages for 647 sites, representing roughly 20,000 seats into DOE field offices.

The mix of sites reflects the strength of our city’s network of community-based organizations offering services that make them well positioned to expand full-day options starting in September.

Applicants include:

- Organizations already providing half-day and/or full-day UPK services proposing to convert half-day seats and/or add full-day classes at either existing or new locations;
- Those with experience providing early childhood services in non-UPK settings; or
- Experienced education or social service agencies committed to bringing on leaders with experience and certification in early childhood education.

The number of sites and seats proposed far exceeds numbers from last year and offers a pool of applications large enough to produce enough approved quality providers. The city saw a 93 percent spike in the number of full-day sites proposed, compared to last year’s results. The geographic spread ensures that communities across the city will benefit from expanded options.

Number of Full-Day Sites Proposed: Comparison to Last Year^{iv}

	2013	2014
Queens	113	214
Brooklyn	107	232
Staten Island	22	52
Manhattan	32	56
Bronx	61	93
TOTAL	335	647

These proposals come with details around everything from the specific locations where children will receive services, to the curriculum and family engagement practices programs will offer. In addition to typical pre-K community-based settings, proposals included sites in Archdiocese, Diocese, public library, and NYCHA facilities.

The DOE is already working closely with other city agencies, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), to determine what the non-permitted sites need to get ready for September and how the start-up funding included in the mayor’s plan can support those efforts. This cross-agency coordination builds on an existing partnership and goes even further: While in the past, the DOE worked with DOHMH as late as the summer to address issues and ensure sites that could meet the requirements were permitted in time to begin fall classes, the DOE and DOHMH are taking a more proactive approach by surfacing potential issues, designating staff focused on that coordination, and setting up regular meetings with DOHMH, the Department of Buildings, and FDNY to monitor and advance progress. Start-up costs include funding for additional DOHMH inspectors to ensure sites are reviewed and permitted in time for the start of school.

Now that proposals are in, DOE is moving forward with reviewing proposals and conducting site visits on all sites that meet minimum qualifications, meaning that the organization has at least one year of experience providing early childhood education services or a leader with early childhood certification and at least two years of experience providing early childhood education. If a site does not have a DOHMH permit or the equivalent in place, they must, at minimum, have a letter of intent to rent a space.

Even before the deadline, a 60-person team consisting of staff from the DOE’s Office of Early Childhood Education with operational and instructional expertise received training on the RFP and scoring rubric. To prepare for the expected large volume of proposals, the DOE brought on and trained 20 additional reviewers, making a total review team of 80. Teams of three reviewers will evaluate proposals and conduct site visits through the end of March. In April, DOE field office leadership will engage sites that meet quality expectations in budget negotiations.

Additional Expansion Opportunities

In addition to the RFP, the DOE surveyed existing UPK CBO providers with DOE contracts to gauge interest and capacity for providing full-day pre-K this fall. All 507 sites completed the survey. While some of those providers applied for full-day through the RFP, those that did not serve as a viable pipeline for additional services to be offered starting this fall. Preliminary estimates suggest that the DOE could potentially secure 6,000-8,000 more seats by engaging half-day UPK providers from survey respondents who did not submit an RFP.

Between the 20,000 seats proposed through the RFP and 6,000-8,000 additional seats identified through the space survey, the DOE will meet September CBO targets, even if the DOE does not allocate seats to all applicants. DOE is prepared to run an additional mini-solicitation this spring, if necessary.

To ensure enough space is available for both years of implementation, the city continues to pursue additional space opportunities, including spaces in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments, libraries, Archdiocese and Diocese facilities, and other privately-held spaces.

DOE, in collaboration with the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), will send out a survey to 350 additional sites that may have space this week. These sites currently serve 12,681 4-year-olds with half-day pre-K combined with Child Care and Head Start services, through a contract with ACS.

IV. Public School Application Survey

As with the CBO RFP, public schools in our application pipeline come from communities across all five boroughs, surpass our responses from last year, and include enough seats to meet Year 1 public school targets. Based on application survey results, schools across the city are together proposing to offer roughly 9,000 new and converted full-day seats. That number represents more than double what DOE is projecting is needed to meet public school targets for Year 1 and an increase of 150 percent from proposals submitted last year.

Number of Elementary Schools Proposing Full-Day Pre-K: Comparison to Last Year^v

	2013	2014
Queens	17	77
Brooklyn	51	105
Staten Island	4	28
Manhattan	18	30
Bronx	22	42
TOTAL	112	282

Our pipeline in areas with large seat gaps is strong. Approximately 60 percent of schools that applied and requested seats are in neighborhoods with a large seats gap.^{vi} Roughly 62 percent of schools

intending to apply came from areas considered high-need, using the economic needs index (free lunch eligibility, temporary housing, HRA eligibility) and student achievement.

Public schools, like CBOs, must identify space to be used for pre-K classes as part of the application process. Teams of DOE reviewers with instructional expertise started site visits the week of February 10. In addition to observing instruction and interviewing administrators, these reviewers verify that the space proposed meets DOE requirements. Follow-up calls and visits are conducted as necessary by the DOE's Office of Space Planning. Proposal reviews and site visits will continue through mid-March. The majority of decisions will be finalized by March 17. As of February 24, 40 schools were visited. Through these extensive reviews, DOE will determine which schools meet quality and space requirements. DOE expects that these assessments, happening alongside the CBO reviews, will produce a breakdown of public school and CBO allocations roughly similar to the current split for new seats. The breakdown will likely vary by neighborhood, depending on proposals coming in from each.

To continue to build the pipeline of schools that may offer full-day pre-K to support expansion, now that the initial application deadline passed, DOE is putting in place a rolling application process. Schools can continue to submit applications. Those that respond will be considered for expansion in September 2014 or 2015, depending on the need.

The number of programs and classrooms needed to support citywide expansion of full-day pre-K is no longer an abstract number of potential classrooms. Leaders on the ground, in public schools, and community-based organizations have put forth proposals for services to be offered in classrooms starting this September.

V. Capacity to Support Implementation

DOE is prepared, with the infrastructure, interagency partnerships, expertise, and leadership to move forward with these efforts.

First, the DOE's Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) has a team of 150 people involved in both the review of applications described above and other key aspects of the plan. OECE central staff is organized by functional areas that coincide with key components of the mayor's plan:

- Instruction and Performance (Professional development for teachers, principals and CBO Directors, ongoing support at program level, curricula resource development)
- Strategy and Policy (Data analysis, quality assurance and research)
- Family Engagement (Outreach/enrollment, guides for families)
- Operations (Oversight of space and permit coordination with DOHMH, DOB and FDNY, budget, CBO contracts, processing and onboarding of new staff)

Borough-based field offices include operational and instructional teams with extensive institutional knowledge and experience supporting and monitoring both operational and program quality. Their insights and day-to-day work with program administrators and teachers will ensure the expansion and sustainability of universal pre-K in New York City is regularly informed by the successes and needs of programs directly interfacing with children and families.

In order to support expansion and sustainability of high quality programming, DOE will build on this existing infrastructure with additional staff. The most significant growth will be in direct field support needed for ongoing monitoring and support of operational and programmatic quality over the next year and a half. While numbers are still being finalized, DOE projects a need for approximately 160 instructional coaches, operations analysts, social workers, and family engagement specialists to support full implementation. As in previous years when DOE started hiring for similar types of positions in the spring, DOE expects to have a significant number of staff to support Year 1 of implementation in place before the school year begins.

Second, the DOE is ramping up to support programs in identifying qualified teachers for new classrooms. The DOE has already established a system for CBO Directors to access a pool of individuals who apply for teaching positions through the DOE's online system. The DOE piloted the system last year with approximately 90 CBO users. As a result, CBOs and schools can connect with approximately 2,000 teachers with early childhood certification who typically apply to the DOE each year. To support programs further, the DOE will launch a pre-K specific teacher recruitment initiative in the coming weeks, tentatively known as TeachUPK-NYC. These efforts will make it easier for CBOs and schools to find applicants interested in teaching pre-K and provide guidance on how CBOs and principals can select high quality pre-K teachers from this pool.

Representatives from the city's early childhood leadership also started engaging university partners to identify ways they can support the development of a strong pre-K teacher pipeline, for example New York University, Bank Street, and the City University of New York (CUNY). At a panel on January 31, 2014 organized by CUNY's Professional Development Institute, leaders from DOE and the Administration for Children's Services engaged faculty from several universities in a discussion around expectations of high quality pre-K teaching and how agencies and institutions of higher education can start to work together to support expansion. The mayor's pre-K budget includes \$9 million in start-up funds that could be used for workforce development, including training and support for certified teachers, as well as scholarships and other support to help others earn certification. DOE is prepared to devote funding to move between 300 and 400 early childhood professionals to earn their certification in Year 1 alone. According to Sherry Cleary, Executive Director of CUNY's Professional Development Institute and a member of the mayor's external pre-K implementation working group, these efforts can be achieved through a variety of targeted support, in collaboration with outside partners.

Third, ongoing coordination across city agencies is critical to the success of implementation. The DOE collaborates closely with the Administration for Children's Services, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York City Housing Authority, Department of Buildings, and FDNY. It will hold regular meetings with commissioners from relevant agencies to track implementation through the 2-year period.

VI. Conclusion

The city has the providers, space and educators to implement the mayor’s plan. The missing piece of this puzzle is funding. If the city remains without a new, stable source of revenue, DOE stands ready to enroll families in the slots that exist in the current system. The thousands of new seats proposed by our principals and community leaders will go unfilled, and another cohort of 4-year-olds will miss the opportunity that high-quality pre-kindergarten can offer.

But, if funding is secured, DOE has the infrastructure in place to set up those new seats, ensure that every program serving pre-K children is high quality, and quickly inform families of their options. These community outreach mechanisms range from subway/bus ads, to a cadre of volunteers with established protocols for canvassing neighborhoods with flyers and lists of nearby programs. City Hall’s Community Affairs Office will also bring its resources to bear on the effort.

The DOE has designed ads in English and Spanish to reflect the urgency of moving ahead with citywide expansion: *Opportunity Starts Now. Actue Ahora.*

Increased opportunity for thousands of children can start now. The work of the last several weeks underscores the fact that free, high-quality pre-kindergarten for all is indeed ready to launch.

Appendix

Milestones Met and to be Met

	Implementation milestones met	Upcoming milestones to be met
Identify high quality providers in public schools and CBOs with suitable space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CBO and public school applications developed, released and submitted ✓ Citywide and targeted outreach to build applicant pipeline ✓ Informational sessions on quality expectations and process for potential applicants ✓ Cadre of DOE reviewers formed and trained ✓ All 507 sites that contract with DOE completed space survey ✓ Coordination with other city agencies to get sites ready (e.g., DOHMH, DOB, FDNY, ACS) 	<p>Conduct space survey of 350 ACS CBO sites: February- mid-March</p> <p>First set of public school decisions finalized by 3/17</p> <p>All public school decisions finalized by 3/31</p> <p>CBO application reviews and site visits: March</p> <p>CBO budget negotiations: April</p> <p>Finalize CBO decisions: May/June</p>
Maximize participation in programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outreach materials developed (e.g., subway/bus ads, flyers) ✓ Interagency and local partnerships formed ✓ Canvassing procedures and cadre of volunteers developed 	<p>Centralized admissions process for public school options: March-April</p> <p>Inform families of new public school options</p>
Recruit and select high quality teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ System in place for CBOs to access resumes of DOE applicants ✓ Collaboration with local universities and colleges initiated ✓ Draft materials for pre-K specific recruitment and selection created 	<p>Pre-K specific recruitment initiative launched on DOE website: March</p> <p>Individual follow up with universities and colleges to determine how each can support pipeline development</p>
Train and support teachers, assistants, and administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Framework for providing ongoing instructional support in place ✓ Sample pre-K curricula units advancing state pre-K learning standards available online ✓ Guidance for partnering with families to support standards based learning available ✓ Initial review of pre-K curricula done 	<p>Complete and share curricula review with programs: Mid-April</p> <p>Develop university partnerships for summer training: April</p>

Breakdown of September 2014 Targets by Setting and Component of Mayor’s Plan

September, 2014 Full-day Expansion Seat Targets	
TOTAL	21,440
Public schools	4,240
CBOs	17,200

These converted and new seats, combined with enhancements to existing DOE public school or CBO full-day options and ACS EarlyLearn seats being brought up to the UPK model, together total the 53,600 children who will have access to free, high quality full-day pre-K by this September.

September, 2014 Full-day Expansion and Enhancement Targets				
Conversions	New Seats	Enhancements to Existing DOE public school or CBO full-day options	Bringing ACS EarlyLearn seats up to new UPK model	TOTAL (by September, 2014)
10,360	11,080	19,483	12,681	53,604

ⁱ Based on DOE analysis of unaudited data.

ⁱⁱ Projections for meeting September 2014 targets assume approval rates that account for past experience and factors unique to this year.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Appendix for a summary of milestones already met and upcoming deadlines and a breakdown of Year 1 targets by setting and component of the mayor’s expansion plan.

^{iv} Based on DOE analysis of unaudited data.

^v Based on DOE analysis of unaudited data.

^{vi} Seat gaps are defined as the difference between public district and charter kindergarten enrollment and existing full-day options. Seat gaps range from 0 to 3,300. DOE considers 800 seats or more a large seat gap, or the top quartile.