

PHLpreK: THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA'S QUALITY PRE-K PROGRAM

PHLpreK is the City of Philadelphia's quality pre-K initiative which aims to create 6,500 locally-funded, quality pre-K seats by September 2020. By partnering with neighborhood-based pre-K providers committed to maintaining or improving the quality of their program, families have improved access to quality pre-K in their neighborhoods. PHLpreK covers the cost of quality pre-K throughout the school day and school year and is open to all 3- and 4-years-old residing in Philadelphia.



PHLpreK Partners

The City issued two Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) in June 2016 to enroll the first 2000 children. An Expansion RFQ was for quality providers that are currently NAEYC-accredited, PA Department of Education (PDE) certified, or designated STAR-3 or STAR-4 by the state's Keystone STARS quality rating and improvement system. A Growth RFQ was for providers that are not currently STAR-3, STAR-4, PDE certified, or NAEYC-accredited, with the expectation that their pre-K classrooms were STAR-3 or better quality or they would achieve STAR-3 within the first two years of contracting. Overall, the City partnered with 88 programs, 75% of which are minority or woman-owned businesses.

Parental Engagement and Enrollment

- All Philadelphia families are eligible for PHLpreK, regardless of income or employment status.
- Average household income of applicants is \$31,776 per year. 81% of families who have applied live at, or below, the 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines, meaning a family of four earns less than \$48,600 per year.
- Participants reside in nearly every zip code across Philadelphia.

The City is developing a single, online, unified-enrollment system for both providers and families to access City, State, and Federal child care funds, which will be available in year-two of the program. In the interim, the City launched a call center (844-PHL-PREK) and corresponding website (phlprek.org) to assist families in applying for PHLpreK and other public benefits.

Intermediary Organization

The City selected Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) and Urban Affairs Coalition (UAC) to serve as the intermediary through an open-bid process. PHMC and UAC jointly applied, with PHMC serving as the lead agency. PHMC helps Expansion providers meet their benchmarks and issue corresponding progress reports. UAC supports Growth providers by providing back-office technical assistance including HR support, benefits administration, accounting, payroll management, bookkeeping, grants management, bulk purchasing, and audit compliance.

Governance

In January 2017, Mayor Kenney signed an executive order to establish a pre-K advisory board. This board advises the administration on pre-K enrollment processes, monitoring of providers, adherence to quality standards, and other activities intended to ensure the success of PHLpreK and school-readiness of participating students. Appointees have experience in early childhood education, philanthropy, child welfare, childhood development, childhood behavioral health, medicine, higher education or represent critical stakeholder or community interests. The advisory board is responsible for submitting an initial report to the mayor and president of City Council by July 15, 2017, and proposing goals and metrics by which PHLpreK should be measured annually.

Workforce Development

The Mayor's Office of Education (MOE) is focused on developing the pre-K workforce with partners like District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, the Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Key, Community College of Philadelphia and Esperanza by helping Philadelphians who work in pre-K programs obtain an Associate's Degree (AA). In the first year of implementation, Philadelphia needs 100 pre-K lead teachers entering the field with at least an AA. The program will then need 50-75 credentialed teachers for each following year of implementation.

The Kenney administration also successfully advocated for pre-K teacher positions to be added as a high priority occupation through Philadelphia Works, Inc., the local workforce investment board. MOE convenes an early education workforce development working group to consult on workforce policy and implementation for PHLpreK. Additionally, we are working to ensure that hundreds of high school and post-secondary students in our region consider the opportunities in the high-impact career of early education.

Philanthropic Support

Research shows that quality pre-K is a smart investment in growing minds and one of the best ones that we can make in a child's life. Quality pre-K results in higher graduation rates, increased earning potential, better health, fewer children in special education classes, and reduction in achievement gaps rooted in income and other factors. Quality pre-K programs have also been shown to help stabilize local schools and help parents enter the workforce. The benefits ripple through the community and local economy.

To maximize the impact of PHLpreK, William Penn Foundation awarded a \$1.8 million grant to the National Institute for Early Education Research to support a three-year program evaluation. An additional \$176,000 grant from William Penn Foundation allows MOE to partner with the New York Professional Development Institute to create a formal workforce development strategy. PNC Bank is also supporting PHLpreK's workforce initiative by funding a program that teaches financial literacy to pre-K center owners and directors. This helps providers learn how to blend multiple funding streams, build capacity of their small businesses, and pay staff higher wages.

MOE is seeking corporate and philanthropic partners to bolster the local investment in PHLpreK and help more children prepare for kindergarten. Pre-k providers all across the city are ready to make facility enhancements that improve the quality of their learning environments. For example, small classroom upgrades like installing bathrooms and sinks or constructing outdoor play spaces, can improve the health of a center and its quality rating. Centers also seek essential consumables like books, science and art supplies; as well as proven curriculum and tools to train teachers. Contact MOE at 215-686-0312 to find out how you or your business can partner with PHLpreK!



Erie's Future Fund was formed in 2011, an outgrowth of the Erie Community Foundation's Early Childhood Advisory Panel in partnership with United Way of Erie County, Success By 6, members of the Early Learning Investment Commission and Erie Together. Leaders from the foundation, corporate, nonprofit and civic sectors sought to address growing concerns about the lack of school readiness among many children entering kindergarten, and the significant impact this was having now, and would have in the future, on Erie County's economy and quality of life.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, administered by Early Connections, Erie's Future Fund has provided scholarships to qualified children from low income families throughout Erie County to attend a high-quality early childhood education program during the school year. Scholarships pay for three half-days a week, the educational component of a program. The scholarships help remove financial barriers to families choosing high-quality child care and early education opportunities. The Scholarship Director monitors the programs to make sure they maintain their quality status and also keeps track of the attendance of the scholarship children. Erie's Future Fund's scholarship program was the first of its kind in Pennsylvania!

Scholarship families are diverse in their backgrounds, but alike in the struggles of poverty. Many families work two or three jobs to make ends meet, some have disabilities, are veterans, college students, new Americans, grandparents or relatives raising children, experiencing loss of employment, and more. Since 2012, over 1000 scholarship opportunities have been provided due to the generosity of our local businesses and donors. In 2016, the Summer Scholars program (three half-days a week scholarship to a high-quality program in Erie County) was added to try to decrease the educational "summer slide" that children experience, and also provide a nutritious breakfast and lunch during the summer. Also, in the beginning of 2017 and due to the generosity of our donors, a five half-day a week option was provided to Erie's Future Fund Scholars for scholarships during the school year!

Erie's Future Fund is proud to share the results from the 2015-2016 school year. Assessment data from our Scholars is gathered each year to monitor scholar progress, and focuses on Key Learning Areas that are extracted from the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for quality early childhood education. They are research-based, help provide a seamless transition to learning in kindergarten, and essential to help our children succeed in school, graduate, and productively contribute to our community. Our scholars were rated in each Key Learning Area as proficient (the skill or knowledge is demonstrated consistently), in process (the skill or knowledge is emerging but not demonstrated consistently), or not yet (the skill or knowledge is not demonstrated).

Data gathered focused on five Key Learning Areas:

1. Mathematical Thinking and Expression
2. Scientific Thinking and Technology
3. Language and Literacy Development
4. Social and Emotional Development
5. Learning Through Play

Data gathered from our scholarship year revealed that by the end of the school year, an average of 92% of our 3 year-old scholars were in process or proficient in the Key Learning Areas, and an average of 95% of our 4 year-old scholars were in process or proficient in the five Key Learning Areas. Congratulations, Scholars!

Because of the Erie's Future Fund, more children within Erie County are prepared for success in kindergarten, will be less likely to use special education services and repeat a grade, less likely to become involved in juvenile crime, and will be more likely to graduate on time and enter the skilled workforce. Thank you Erie County, for your support to provide our children within Erie County a better chance to succeed!



BRIDGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

In 2013 the York Area Early Learning Investment Commission members in partnership with the United Way of York County and OCDEL established The Bridge Scholarship Program to assist child care professionals who wanted to further their education. Prior to 2013 teachers could fund their continuing education through Project T.E.A.C.H. In FY 2011/12, however, funding for T.E.A.C.H. was discontinued due to state budget cuts resulting in a dramatic drop in the number of Pre K teachers taking courses. This Bridge Program was designed to dovetail with the State Voucher Program and get these teachers back in the classroom.

To be eligible to participate, teachers had to be employed at a Child Care Center which participated in Keystone Stars and to apply for the State Voucher Program. The Voucher Program reimbursed 90% of tuition cost for students who complete early childhood related courses with a grade of B or better. Because participants had to pay the tuition up front, most child care workers were unable to take advantage of the program. Enrollment in early childhood courses at HACC, Penn State York and York College dropped from approximately 145 with Project T.E.A.C.H. to only a handful in 2012.

The Bridge Scholarship Program addressed this problem by guaranteeing payment to the three institutions (regardless of the grade obtained) in return for their agreeing to defer tuition until the end of the semester. In addition, the Bridge Scholarship Program paid the 10% of tuition and fees not covered by the Voucher Program and provided a \$100 stipend for each course successfully completed.

Funding for the Bridge Scholarship Program was provided through donations and through Educational Improvement Tax Credits (EITC). To get the program started, we asked a small numbers of friends who appreciated the importance of high quality early childhood education to join the ELIC Members by pledging to contribute \$5,000 per year for three years. The United Way agreed to contribute 20% of the EITC Early Childhood Scholarship money they received to the program.

OCDEL provided support by increasing the tuition reimbursement to 95%, by allowing students to pre-qualify for the program and by paying the schools directly. This enhanced program was named Rising Stars.

Because funding for Project T.E.A.C.H. was reinstated last year, the Bridge Scholarship Program is currently being phased out.

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