

Action Item - 20

Board of Education Meeting Date: 3/27/2025

Title: Application for and Acceptance of Grants from Various Public Sources for the Operation of Preschool Programs (\$132,000,000)

Action Under Consideration:

The Administration recommends that the Board of Education authorize The School District of Philadelphia, through the Superintendent or his designee, to accept a Grant or Grants as follows:

From:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
The Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Human Services;
Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP); and
The City of Philadelphia

Purpose:

To continue to support the provision of high-quality, comprehensive preschool ("preK") programming to age- and income-eligible children and their families throughout Philadelphia.

Grant(s) Start Date: 07/01/2025

Grant(s) End Date: 06/30/2026

Amount up to: \$132,000,000

- From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for Head Start Basic grant funding, in an amount not to exceed \$53,750,000 to serve 3,904 eligible students;
- The Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Human Services, for Pre-K Counts (PKC) grant funding, in an amount not to exceed \$43,250,000 to serve 3,824 eligible students;
- Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) grant funding, in an amount not to exceed \$26,000,000 to serve 2,074 eligible students; and
- The City of Philadelphia, for PHLPreK grant funding, in an amount not to exceed \$9,000,000 to serve 800 eligible students

Location(s):

Citywide deployment in locations directly staffed and managed by the School District, as well as those sites operated by community-based preK partner agencies that qualify through the District's competitive procurement process.

Description:**Why are these grants needed?**

For over two decades, the School District of Philadelphia has been the single largest provider of quality preK programming for three and four-year-olds in Philadelphia. This action item seeks authorization to continue to apply for and accept targeted federal, state and city funding that is available to continue the provision of preK services to nearly 11,000 children and their families annually. The District's preK programming is provided through internally-operated programs at District buildings (primarily elementary schools) as well as partner-operated programs at state-licensed early learning centers, the latter of which have (1) qualified for this work through a rigorous competitive procurement process run by the District, and (2) maintained high quality status ratings within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's system for authorizing and monitoring preK, known as Keystone STARS.

How is this work connected to the District's plan to achieve Goals & Guardrails?

Decades of national research have provided clear evidence that children who attend high-quality preK do better in school, are less likely to repeat a grade or require remediation services, and have better socio-emotional skills and behaviors than their non-participating peers. Local data replicate these national findings: children who participate in District-managed preK programs enter Kindergarten better prepared academically and socially than their non-participating peers, positively contributing to the Board of Education's overall Goals and Guardrails for academic performance and child development.

Does this Action Item support a specific intervention from the Strategic Plan?

The District's preK programming is directly supportive of the overall Strategic Plan, and in particular Priority Areas 2 & 3 related to Partnering with families and the larger community, as well as Accelerating academic achievement.

How will the success of this work be measured?

Performance metrics for all of the District's preK programs are collected across a variety of domains, from student academic and health outcomes to programmatic and fiscal compliance, and are reviewed and analyzed annually to assess results as well as inform future programming and support needs.

What evidence exists to support this approach?

High quality preK is generally accepted by national researchers and policy makers as an evidence-based strategy that provides substantial short and long-term academic, behavioral, social and health benefits for children, as well as positive social and economic impacts for the larger community. For two recent and widely published studies documenting this evidence, see the National Bureau of Economic Research's The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston (May 2021, by Guthrie Gray-Lobe, Parag A. Pathak and Christopher R. Walters) and The Lifecycle Benefits of a Prototypical Early Childhood Program (2019, by James Heckman, Jorge Luis García, Duncan Ermini Leaf, and María José Prados).

Funding Source(s):

FY25-26 Federal Head Start Program Grant;
FY25-26 PA Pre-K Counts Program Grant;
FY25-26 PA Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Grant; and
FY25-26 City PHLPreK Program Initiative

Office Originating Request:

School Performance/Early Childhood Education