

Local Preschool Expansion Initiative Case Studies

Abbot Preschool Program

New Jersey State

Program Summary

The Abbott Preschool Program was created in 1999 in response to a New Jersey Supreme Court decision that found inequities in student opportunities across the state. The program serves 31 of New Jersey's poorest school districts, providing 6-hour, 180-day preschool to 3- and 4-year-olds. Though many of the program specifications were laid out within the court decision, some components, such as pre-K to kindergarten transition efforts and curriculum alignment, were integrated into the program over time.ⁱ

Classroom Environment

Each class is taught by a teacher holding either a bachelor's degree in Early Child Education or a bachelor's degree and additional credit hours in Early Child Education, and a teacher assistant. In an effort to increase the availability of qualified teachers, salary incentives were provided to bachelor's recipients who qualify for a Certificate of Eligibility through the alternative certification route.ⁱⁱ

The program model serves two thirds of children through contracts to private centers and Head Start agencies, and the rest in public classroom settings. There are five different curricula available, ranging from structured to play-based learning. Each classroom is capped at 15 students. The program provides extended-day and extended-year wrap-around services (10-hour, 245-day preschool) funded through the state Department of Human Services.

The program encourages the support of home language and dual language programs, and cultural competence was included as a professional knowledge base requirement.

Leadership and Systems Integration

Because of the dedicated resources and accelerated time to program implementation, school districts, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations collaborated in developing postsecondary curriculum that met the program's needs. As a result, there are currently 14 four-year colleges and universities with P-3 endorsement or certification programs, ranging from bachelor's programs providing initial certification to specialized graduate tracks. A scholarship was also initiated to pay for teacher tuition as teachers upgrade their qualifications.ⁱⁱⁱ

Funding

Initially, the money provided to support the Abbott Preschool Program was not based on the availability of funds, but on the funds required to provide high-quality preschool programming. In 2008, the state school funding formula includes funding to phase in serving all

children in 84 additional high-poverty school districts and low-income children in all other school districts across the state.

The program is funded through the existing state school funding formula, which is supported by local and state property tax revenue.

Outcomes

The program showed initial and intermediate outcomes, as measured by 2nd and 4th/5th grade impacts on literacy, math, and grade retention. When looking at differential impacts based on two versus one year of participation, evaluators saw high oral language skills, early literacy, and early mathematics effects, and significant higher impacts on literacy and math in 2nd and 5th grade follow up, except in grade retention and special education, for those who received two years of preschool.

For more implementation details, see the current implementation guidelines:

<https://www.nj.gov/education/ece/guide/impguidelines.pdf>

Key Takeaways for Multnomah County

Although the process for developing Abbott was partially by mandate, many of the activities that took place on a progressed timeline provide ideas for innovative ways to fill capacity gaps, such as the development of pathways for individuals with postsecondary degrees but no background in early childhood education.

ⁱ Anisha Ford. *Looking Back and Towards the Future: Abbot Preschools After 20 Years*. New America. May 8, 2018. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/looking-back-and-towards-future-abbott-preschool-after-20-years/>

ⁱⁱ Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman. "Creating a Qualified Preschool Teaching Workforce Part 1: Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's Abbot District to Improve their Qualifications". March 3, 2004. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GettingQualified_PreK_teachers.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman. March 3, 2004.

Boston Public Schools Prekindergarten Program (BPP)

Boston, MA

Program Summary

In 2005, prekindergarten became available district-wide to 4-year-olds. The Boston Prekindergarten Program (BPP) provides free school-day length, school-year long programming across the Boston Public Schools service area. Initially, program delivery was only school-based; now, 45 percent of program delivery occurs in community-based settings.^{iv}

Classroom Environment

Initially, the BPP program used more-structured curriculum, but quickly adapted to add play-based options based on early program outcomes and feedback. The program includes consideration for home language support, special needs, and school feeder system alignment.

The program requires teachers to hold bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education, and they must obtain a master's degree within five years of their start date. Teachers are paid on the same scale as K-12 teachers. The program requires minimum adult-child ratios of 2:22 in public settings and 2:20 in community-based settings.

All program standards, including education requirements, curricula materials, coaching and training, support for center directors, and increased pay, apply to both school and community-based settings. Extended-care options are available only in community-based settings.

Leadership and Systems Integration

BPP is led by Boston Public Schools, through a newly formed Department of Early Education. The Department developed the BPP system with research-based policy and program improvement in mind. In the last year, a 30-member committee, consisting of parents, program representatives, Boston Public Schools leaders, philanthropy, business, higher education, and nonprofit and children's advocacy organization, has begun planning for a high-quality, truly universal iteration of BPP based on community and evaluator findings to date. Currently, BPP does not consider the program to be universal, since all sites do not meet their minimum quality standards.

BPP is currently in phase two of a two phase program to integrate the learning environment, curriculum, family engagement, program evaluation, and assessment from prekindergarten through second grade in order to decrease the fade-out effects of prekindergarten on long-term student outcomes. As of 2017, BPP has moved from the pilot phase of the integration system to implement the integrated program across the whole district.^v

Outcomes

Prior to including community-based settings, the BPP showed substantial and significant impacts across kindergarten readiness domains, with larger impacts seen across most domains for students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch and Hispanic students, and to a lesser extent, Asian and Black students.

A recent assessment of program outcomes found lower quality learning environments in community-based settings. Reported reasons for different outcomes included:

- Resistance to change in program curricula
- Instruction disruption due to informal program start and end times
- Issues adhering to curricula in mixed-age classrooms (curriculum was specifically designed for 4-year-olds)
- A lack of common planning time
- A lack of qualified teachers

Community-based sites were found to have better at meeting family childcare needs, providing more parent interaction time (because transportation was not provided for community-based sites), and provided more opportunities for oral language skill development through family-style meals.^{vi}

Funding

BPP is funded partially by the city and local school district using a combination of Title 1 funds, a federal preschool expansion grant for the initial demonstration program, and foundation grants, TANF, Head Start, and other government subsidies also contribute to the current budget.^{vii} Growth among community-based sites has been based on applications by providers. An assessment of the distribution of high-quality preschool sites within the program has not been conducted.

Key Takeaways for Multnomah County

Boston provides insights into detailed issues faced in mixed-delivery models. Evaluators suggest mitigating some of the community-based issues by (1) piloting community-based programs before full roll-out to develop capacity and (2) restricting the share of non-4-year-olds in participating classrooms.

Evaluators also suggested that the lack of income restrictions may be driving some of the larger impacts to low-income children. Research suggests that in K-12 settings, low-socioeconomic-status students benefit from learning in classrooms with higher socioeconomic-status peers.

^{iv} Christina Weiland and Hirokazu Yoshikawa. "Impacts of a Prekindergarten Program on Children's Mathematics, Language, Literacy, Executive Function, and Emotional Skills". March 27, 2013. *Child Development*, November/December 2013, Volume 84, Number 6, Pages 2112-2130.

^v Boston Public Schools, Department of Early Childhood. Mission and Strategic Plan.

<https://www.bpsearlylearning.org/mission-strategic-plan/>

^{vi} Christina Weiland. "Can Successful Preschool Programs Work Outside Public Schools?". *Focus*, Volume 33, Number 2, Spring/Summer 2017.

^{vii} Susan Muenchow, and Emily Weinberg. May 2016. Ten Questions Policymakers Should Ask About Expanding Access to Preschool. Education Policy Center at American Institutes for Research.

Seattle Preschool Program (SPP)

Seattle, WA

Program Summary

In 2015, Seattle's Department of Education began a four-year preschool development and demonstration phase to expand preschool programs. The program's long-term goal is to serve 3- and 4-year-olds from families making less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. The City expects roughly 80 percent of families with eligible children will chose not to participate. Tuition was initially free for all participants in eligible families.

Classroom Environment

The program established a mixed-delivery model, working with Seattle Public Schools and community-based preschool providers. The City also piloted a Family Child Care Pilot to assess whether and how partnering with family child care providers could implement the same quality standards as other placements. The program funds curricular materials and training for HighScope or Creative Curriculum for Preschool for participating sites, and embedded instructional coaching.

Based on consultant recommendations, preschool classes were required to operate for 6 hours per day, 5 days a week, 180 day per year – closely following the Seattle School District calendar year. Providers offering before- and after-school care are prioritized for funding.

Services are targeted to meet the needs of low-income families, and as such providers are prioritized based on evidence of high-quality practice and proximity to underperforming, high ELL, and high free- or reduced-price-lunch-eligibility elementary school areas. The City also prioritizes dual language classrooms representative of the Seattle population, and supports teachers obtaining bilingual endorsements or certifications.

The top tier contracting priority for community sites is whether the proposed location in areas where public elementary schools have low academic achievement. If a community is saturated with existing programs, programs with higher ratings with the state school rating program (Washington's Early Achievers Program) are prioritized.

Program staff are allowed up to four years to meet certification requirements:

- Directors and program supervisors: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or a bachelor's degree with at least 24 credit-hours in Early Learning Education and 9 hours of education leadership or business management.
- Lead teachers: Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a teaching certificate with a P-3 endorsement.
- Assistant teachers: Associate degree in Early Childhood Education or two years of Early Childhood Education coursework.

- Coaches: Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education and a teaching certificate with a P-3 endorsement.

Compensation for lead teachers is aligned with Seattle Public Schools salary schedules for teachers with the same level of education and experience. Higher education academic advising and tuition support for teachers, physical and professional capacity building funding and training, and continuing education opportunities are all part of the City’s larger support model.

Leadership and Systems Integration

In the development of the SPP the City involved the community in the Race and Social Justice Initiative review process, and programmatic choices were made in response to equity concerns from community and advisory committee members. Other details on the design process and stakeholder input can be found within the program’s Implementation Plan.^{viii}

Funding

The initial four-year program demonstration is supported by a four-year \$58 million property tax levy.

Outcomes

Early assessments of program outcomes by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) found improvements between years one and two (2015-16 and 2016-17) in classroom experiences, parent connectivity and communication, and for minority youth and dual language children.^{ix}

Key Takeaways for Multnomah County

The SPP incorporates elements from previous preschool programs, focusing on lessons learned by other program expansions. Additionally, SPP specifically includes targeted dual language instruction preference and focuses on addressing needs of diverse providers and families, which is not the case for most program expansion initiatives to date.

^{viii} City of Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning. The Seattle Preschool Program Plan, Demonstration Phase: 2015-2018. July 7, 2015.

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OFE/AboutTheLevy/EarlyLearning/SPP_ProgramPlan2015-16_Final.pdf

^{ix} Nores, M., Barnett, W.S., Joseph, G., Stull, & Soderberg, J.S.. “Year 2 report: Seattle Pre-k program evaluation”. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research & Seattle, WA: Cultivate Learning. 2017. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SPP-Evaluation-Year-2-Final-Report-v11.1.17_EDITED.pdf

PHLpreK

Philadelphia, PA

Program Summary

Philadelphia is currently supporting a three-year, initial implementation of an expanded full-day, full-year preschool program, which started in 2017. The program is universal—all 3- and 4-year-olds are eligible to enroll—but targets neighborhoods with high academic-failure risk factors. By targeting in this way, they are focusing on serving those eligible for the state pre-k program, which limits eligibility to children from households making less than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Philadelphia has an estimated preschool gap of 17,000 for children living until 300 percent of the federal poverty level and plans to add 6,500 high-quality preschool slots between the 2017 and 2019 fiscal years.^x

Philadelphia's targeting system for slot funding is unique among preschool expansion initiatives, in that it utilizes child-level integrated human services data to more precisely pinpoint areas of need.

Classroom Environment

Philadelphia's program requires a bachelor's degree for teachers and an associate degree for assistant teachers. Existing sites just below the quality requirements are allowed to host slots but must commit to meeting quality requirements with support.

All placements are with private providers; existing public preschool classrooms have not yet been integrated into the program. Although pay increased for private child care providers, private provider pay is still not on par with public preschool teachers and teaching assistants, who are integrated into the K-12 pay scale.^{xi} Providers are able to select any curriculum model that is pre-approved for state preschool programs.

All Lead Teachers must have a minimum of an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, or related field as defined by the states PA Career Pathway. All Assistant Teachers (required to be present in classrooms with over 10 children) must have a CDA credential or PA Career Pathway equivalent.^{xii}

Leadership and Systems Integration

The City is collaborating with local universities and community colleges to develop pathways for certification and advanced degree requirements. The City is also supporting the development of articulation agreements for local postsecondary institutions.

A public-private corporation serves as an intermediary between the City and providers, handling contracting, payments to providers, program compliance and fiscal monitoring, enrollment verification, program support and data infrastructure.

Outcomes

The program has not existed long enough to assess participant outcomes.

Funding

Philadelphia is also unique in terms of the program funding mechanism—preschool expansion is entirely funded through a new city beverage tax. The program’s funding mechanism is controversial, because slots are completely funded by the tax regardless of a child’s household income. In the first year of implementation, 90 percent of children met the state pre-k income maximum of 300% of the federal poverty level.

Key Takeaways for Multnomah County

“Hot spot” approaches, rather than individual eligibility criteria, to selecting where to fund preschool slots can be effective in reaching high-risk youth. Additionally, Philadelphia has implemented a unique funding and program management structure that is worth monitoring to assess its success as the program expands.

^x Mayor’s Office of Education, City of Philadelphia. Expanding Pre-K: Implementation Plan.

^{xi} Avi Woldman-Arent. *Here’s who’s benefiting from Philly’s pre-k expansion*. March 27, 2017. Whyy.

<https://why.org/articles/heres-whos-benefitting-from-phillys-pre-k-expansion/>

^{xii} <http://www.phlprek.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CAP-Application-Packet-FY19.pdf>

Denver Preschool Program (DPP)

Denver, CO

Program Summary

The Denver Preschool Program (DPP) began during the 2007-2008 school year but 2008-2009 was its first full year of operation. DPP serves only 4-year-olds who live in the city or county of Denver (however, DPP programs may be located outside of Denver). During the 2016-17 school year, 4,997 families applied to receive tuition credits for their child's last year of preschool before kindergarten, representing an estimated 61 percent of Denver's 4-year-olds. Just over half of these children came from families with incomes less than \$30,000 per year, which has been consistent for the last several years. About 43 percent were Hispanic, a slight decline over recent years, while 48 percent of children under age 18 in Denver are of Hispanic origin.^{xiii}

DPP funding is used to provide parents with tuition credits to enable them to enroll their children in high quality preschool so that they are better prepared to begin kindergarten. During the 2016-17 school year, monthly tuition credits ranged from \$55 to \$551 for full-day, level 4-rated preschools; 89 percent of schools were rated level 4 or higher, with community preschools having somewhat lower quality levels than Denver Public Schools preschool sites.^{xiv} The amount of the tuition credit varies by the quality of the program in which the child is enrolled, family income and size, and the amount of time the child attends the program (which includes average attendance, full- or part-time enrollment, and whether the child participates in extended day care). DPP programs can also receive a "mini-grant" to purchase supplies and materials to improve classroom quality. DPP funding is also available for professional development and coaching to improve staff knowledge and skills as well as to support programs' quality rating assessment.

Program operating schedule varies by site: part-time programs provide at least 5 hours per week; full-day programs provide at least 25 hours per week; and extended day programs provide at least 33 hours per week.

Classroom Environment

Programs must be licensed in order to qualify for DPP. DPP can be provided by community-based organizations, including both centers and home-based providers, as well as the Denver Public Schools. They must also participate in a three-part quality improvement process: (1) introduction to quality orientation; (2) quality rating; (3) develop a quality improvement plan.

Quality ratings are based on five areas of preschool classroom quality: (1) learning environment, (2) family partnership, (3) staff training and education, (4) adult-to-child ratio, and (5) accreditation through a national organization.^{xv} Programs are re-rated every two years. The family partnership area includes family and community engagement, program cultural sensitivity, and home language materials and the availability of interpreters. Additional optional points can be assigned if at least one teacher or staff member in each classroom who is

bilingual in the dominant second language in the classroom. DPP provides quality improvement process and resources, which includes professional development, financial resources for materials and equipment, coaching, and funding for the quality rating process. Seventy-three percent of community preschool programs reported receiving coaching from DPP.

A unique aspect of DPP is that, unlike many other publicly funded preschool programs, it does not set specific requirements for programs. Instead, tuition credit levels are set based on programs' quality rating, with higher quality programs receiving larger tuition credits per child. Indicators of structural quality, like teacher qualifications, class size, curricula, and professional development, vary across programs. For example, programs with a quality rating of 4 stars tend to have most staff with at least an AA in early childhood education or BA, but programs with a rating of 2 or 3 stars tend to have only some staff with an AA in ECE. Evaluations have indicated that the tuition credit has encouraged lower income families to choose higher quality programs for their children, but there is limited awareness of quality ratings overall among most families. Location and quality teachers were identified as the top factors for preschool selection for most families, with perceptions of quality much more commonly informed by community reputation and word-of-mouth.

Leadership and Systems Integration

DPP was created by the City and County of Denver. DPP is governed by a 7-member board of directors that is appointed by the governor. There is also an advisory board that represents educational and community concerns.

There is no explicit alignment and coordination with local universities. The quality rating system includes a rating for alignment with the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. Denver Public Schools is able to track DPP participants into the local K-12 system.

Funding

In 2006, voters approved the Preschool Matters initiative, a .12% sales tax, to fund DPP, with the goal of encouraging families to enroll their children in high quality preschool. In 2014, voters approved an increased tax of .15% on purchases of over \$100, extending the program that was set to expire in 2016 through 2026. Approximately \$11 million annually supports DPP (although this is expected to increase); approximately 80% of this amount is used for tuition credits that reduce the amount of money parents pay to send their children to preschool.

Outcomes

DPP has engaged evaluators to perform regular assessments of kindergarten readiness and longitudinal outcomes for participants. Although the program has shown higher performance through 4th grade than all other Denver Public School students, a high-quality evaluation has not been performed for the program. Current assessments only compare participants to non-participants based on one student characteristic at a time, rather than using a quasi-experimental approach evaluating matched student pairs with similar characteristics, or other

quasi-experimental methods. Long-term outcomes do not account for the much higher levels of mobility among non-participants.^{xvi}

Key Takeaways for Multnomah County

The DPP program takes an incentive-based approach to building out program capacity, driving enrollment by providing incentives based on program quality metrics. This approach likely provides lower barriers to entry for providers but means that the experience of any one child and family within the program can vary greatly. Because program evaluations to date have not included an assessment of the impacts of the preschool experience across different settings, it is unclear what the true long-term impacts of the program are on student outcomes.

^{xiii} Denver Children’s Affairs. Status of Denver’s Children: A Community Resource 2018.

^{xiv} The Butler Institute for Families, University of Denver. Denver Preschool Program Operations Evaluation: 2016-2017 Program Year.

https://dpp.org/images/general/DPP_Report_1_-_Final.pdf

^{xv} Colorado Shines Quality Rating System. Colorado Shines Program Guide.

http://coloradoshines.force.com/resource/1440607605000/asset_pdfs1/asset_pdfs1/ColoradoShinesProgramGuide.pdf

^{xvi} Evaluation materials can be found on the program website: <https://dpp.org/research-and-results/our-results>