



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is First State Pre-K advocating for?

First State Pre-K is advocating for policymakers to enact high-quality universal pre-K in mixed delivery settings including community-based providers, center-based programs, family child care, Head Start, and public schools. Universal pre-K should be voluntary, full day pre-K accessible to all 4-year-olds regardless of family income available statewide by 2024.

2. Doesn't Delaware already offer public pre-K?

Yes, Delaware's state pre-K program is called [Early Childhood Assistance Program](#) or ECAP, but it is a half-day program only available to two percent of 3-year-olds and five percent of four-year-olds from low-income families.

Delaware [ranks 38th in nation](#) in state-funded pre-K access, and 40th when you add Head Start and special education. An estimated 10,034 four year olds across the state could benefit from universal pre-K.

3. Why should Delaware invest in pre-K?

[Recent studies](#) have shown a 13-percent per-year return on investment in areas including better outcomes in education, health, and employment. Yet, Delaware continues to invest [four times more](#) in K-12 students than it does in three- and four-year-olds, despite the recent studies mentioned above and the fact that more brain development occurs before the age of five.

Delaware's lack of investment in pre-K is detrimental to our young students and our state's progress. 50 percent of children in Delaware are [not served today in a formal child care or educational setting before Kindergarten](#), and 50 percent of children in Delaware are [entering kindergarten without the skills](#) they need to succeed. There are limited quality, affordable options for families seeking pre-K options. All surrounding states (Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, etc.) have surpassed Delaware's offerings, and we are behind almost all other states.

4. Who supports universal pre-K?

A growing number of early learning, education, business, faith, civic and community organizations from across Delaware [support First State Pre-K](#) and a growing list of individuals have [filled out the form](#) to be a campaign supporter.

Additionally, 86 percent of likely voters [support voluntary pre-K](#) for all four-year-olds, according to a 2016 poll by Vision Coalition of Delaware. 90 percent of parents with young children say they would take advantage of universal pre-K in Delaware, according to a Delaware Readiness Teams survey of over 500 Delaware parents.

5. What is meant by “high-quality”?

We are advocating for a high-quality pre-K program based on what research, families, and educators tell us work for children, including:

- A full day, school year, state-funded program (typically six to seven hours)
- Small class sizes
- A certified teacher with a bachelor’s degrees in early childhood and an assistant
- A teacher in every classroom
- State supports and scholarships to help early childhood teachers earn a degree
- Teacher coaches, specialists, and training that provide ongoing support for teachers’ and students’ needs
- Research-based developmentally appropriate curriculum
- “Whole child” supports available to each child regardless of where they are enrolled including developmental and health screenings, nurses, meals, services and inclusive classrooms for special education, English learner supports, supports for low-income children, before and after care, and summer care

6. What is meant by “universal” and “voluntary”?

In a universal program, all children will have guaranteed access to high-quality pre-K, regardless of family income or other qualifying characteristics. Enrollment is voluntary, and without cost to families. We

are advocating that Delaware reach universal pre-K for 4-year-olds by 2024.

7. What is meant by “mixed delivery”?

In order to provide access to all children and meet the needs of all families, we are advocating for high-quality pre-K to be offered in a variety of settings such as community-based providers, center-based programs, family child care, Head Start, and public schools—as our state program is today. In addition to providing options for families and communities, universal programs build on existing provider strengths, capacity and expertise, and facilitate increased coordination and partnership between providers.

8. How does our proposal ensure a mixed delivery system of providers?

We are advocating for mixed delivery system to be the required statewide model. We are advocating Delaware follow what other states have done: require districts to work with providers who can meet quality standards, and provide these providers with higher-per child rates. Other cities and states (like Boston and New Jersey) have successfully executed mixed delivery when expanding access by requiring districts to work with providers who can meet standards and have provided higher per child rates for these settings.

Furthermore, Delaware has a long history in early childhood of incentivizing mixed delivery, just like many public and private providers get state ECAP funding today. First State Pre-K’s proposal recommends a five-year implementation in which providers who could meet the standards would participate.

9. How will universal pre-K impact family providers?

We advocate for small class sizes of 15 children aligned with national research as one of the quality standards providers must meet to participate, but believe that providing families with choices is one of the benefits of a mixed delivery system, and family providers typically enroll fewer children. During the implementation process, Delaware should look at other states’ policies for including Family Child Care Centers. Based on

the NIEER 2018 Yearbook, there were 16 state programs that allowed state preschool funding to flow directly to a family child care home, and about a dozen others that allow the primary recipient of funding to subcontract with a family child care home for slots.

10. Is mixed delivery of universal pre-K the same as a school voucher program? What does this mean for a child care center that is sponsored by a church?

First State Pre-K is not advocating for a school voucher system. Current Delaware law establishes mixed delivery pre-K program in a variety of public and private settings, and First State Pre-K advocates for continued use of mixed delivery, which requires programs to contract and meet quality standards to receive funding from the state. Other states that have implemented universal pre-K have allowed religious programs to participate in universal pre-K, provided that religious instruction and programming are not provided during the hours in the day funded by public pre-K funding.

11. What will this mean for community-based providers and center-based programs? What will this mean for teachers in these programs?

Community-based providers and center-based programs, some of which offer ECAP today, would be able to offer universal pre-K if they can meet the state standards for high-quality and enter a contract or partnership with their local district.

Providers would be paid for a number of slots each school year, with a differential (increased) rate that would include facilities costs.

Teachers of four-year-olds may remain as employees of the provider. Employees of community-based programs will not be required to be employees of the district. In other states with mixed delivery systems, community based program employees remain employees of the center, similar to how ECAP is set up today.

First State Pre-K advocates that teachers be paid salaries and benefits comparable to K-12 teachers, and that the Delaware Department of Education would issue salary guidelines for all providers.

Centers would gain significant funding through a per-child allotment for the school day—in addition to funding for before/after/summer care as they do today; this funding would enable centers to pay higher salaries to their workforce (who are [currently making about \\$9-10/hour](#), about half of what K-12 teachers make without benefits).

Programs would also be supported to meet certain quality standards including scholarships for teachers and startup materials. In surrounding states like New Jersey, teachers were provided full scholarships and waivers to assist in meeting quality standards.

Providing pre-K to all interested families of four-year olds would have to be done in a short timeline, creating a need to partner with child care providers who can scale up quickly in many cases. 50 percent of children in Delaware are [not served today in a formal child care or educational setting before Kindergarten](#); Delaware has about 5,000-6,000 children age four that currently are unserved that will be the target for new programs/additional openings in current programs.

12. How will issues such as transportation, facilities, and student supports be addressed?

We are advocating that the Department of Education will determine through regulations and policy guidance details such as transportation, facilities, student supports, and other implementation details that are typically too specific and nuanced for state code. The process of developing regulations includes opportunities for public feedback.

First State Pre-K encourages and will support engagement and communication from providers, parents, and the community during this process.

13. What will this mean for Head Start?

Head Start centers would participate similarly to how they do now in ECAP and similarly to community-based and center-based providers. In other states that have expanded state-supported pre-K, Head Start receives a supplemental payment to bring them up to the per-child rate of other providers. It is intended to supplement federal funding for the pre-K portion of the day and year.

The National Head Start Association supports growing high quality, state funded pre-K programs. In 2017, the [National Head Start Association](#) stated the following policies recommendations, which align with First State Pre-K's priorities:

- Expand preschool through mixed delivery
- Align state and federal early learning standards to strengthen partnerships and leverage a variety of funding sources
- Ensure children's access to services by developing coordinated recruitment and enroll strategies
- Require that state preschool programs certify that the Head Start programs in a given service area are fully utilized in order to avoid competition for children in the community.

14. How will Delaware pay for universal pre-K expansion?

Delaware is a General Fund State. First State Pre-K is advocating for universal pre-K to be funded through general state funds. We are not proposing a specific, dedicated revenue stream.

Experts equate a \$4-\$9 return for every dollar spend on high quality learning programs for low-income children.

15. What about Purchase of Care (POC) and STARS?

Advocates have made investing in POC and STARS a high priority and achieved increased state investment each of the last two years. We continue to advocate for these necessary funding sources alongside investments in universal pre-K in order to provide high quality, full-day programs that families need. Other states have used funding streams like POC to provide wrap around supports and before/after care to

complement the funding for full day universal pre-K.

16. What does universal pre-K mean for children with disabilities?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), requires that children with a disability ages 3–21 receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) through the provision of special education and related services. In Delaware, FAPE is the responsibility of the school districts.

A full continuum of alternative educational placements must be made available to serve eligible children in their LRE including but not limited to regular early childhood programs such as Head Start, child care centers, and private and public preschools. Universal pre-K would require that districts and child care centers become true collaborative partners in serving all children, and would support inclusive practices, which are research-based and considered best-practice.

17. What are the benefits of a universal pre-Kindergarten program rather than a targeted program for children from families below the poverty line or some other threshold of need?

Many cost-benefit studies that focus only on targeted programs don't capture the added benefits of universal pre-K. While universal programs will cost more, they have greater overall benefits because they:

- Are more effective at identifying and serving all targeted children: Universal programs avoid the following challenges of targeted programs: administrative costs of identifying and enrolling only eligible children, changing eligibility due to family mobility or change in poverty status, and perceived stigmas
- Deliver greater gains for the most disadvantaged children than targeted programs because they tend to be higher quality: A NIEER examination shows targeted programs have not delivered the intensity or quality of educational services shown to be highly effective for children in poverty.
- Generate peer effects from diverse and inclusive classrooms.

Studies show interacting with a broader range of peers improves educational outcomes for children with disabilities and other disadvantages while educating all children in their attitudes and behavior towards others

- Provide benefits to low-wage and middle-class children too, who would not qualify for a targeted program YET still may not afford a high-quality program: Many families whom do not qualify for means-tested programs still spend a significant percentage of their income on child care. A recent ChildAware survey of states found the cost of infant care in Delaware is nearly the same as the annual cost of in-state college tuition at a four-year college.

Also, studies don't often take into account impact on economic development. Local businesses tell us that universal pre-K would be an important tool to recruit and retain employers and employees.

18. How can I get involved?

- [Sign up for our campaign](#) and receive updates on ways to advocate for universal Pre-K in Delaware.
- [Contact your legislator](#) and let them know you support universal Pre-K in Delaware.
- [Submit a letter to the editor and voice your support for universal Pre-K in Delaware.](#)
- [Read and share our materials](#) with your networks.