

Starting Strong

Portland Pre-K Expansion Plan

November 2018



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MAKING THE CASE

The Importance of Early Care and Education

Advances in developmental science have contributed to a growing body of research that points to the critical importance of early experiences to the developing architecture of the brain, providing the foundation for all future learning.i To that end, high-quality, coordinated pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) programs and

WHY INVESTMENTS IN EARLY LEARNING MATTER



THE POTENTIAL

Young children's brains are ready for learning

The brain forms as many as 700 neural connections per second before the age of 5

THE OPPORTUNITY

Children who receive high-quality early education are... MORE LIKELY TO:

- ✓ Show improved reading &
- math
- ✓ Stay in school longer
- ✓ Graduate from high school
- ✓ Attend a 4-year college
- LESS LIKELY TO:
 - Repeat grades
 - Be placed in special education

✓ Drop out of school

And by age 40, they are...

24% more likely to own a

18% more likely to be employed

53% less likely to have multiple arrests More likely to make higher earnings

Source: See endnote i

services can go a long way to ensure the long-term success of children. These programs and services have been linked to improved academic outcomes, lower participation in special education, and higher overall achievement in school. Alongside educational benefits, high-quality early learning is linked to lifelong gains, such as higher earnings, lower participation in social service programs, and lower chances of involvement with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, the benefits of holistic, high-quality early learning programs can extend beyond children to offer families needed social and economic support, create jobs in local communities, and enable families to participate in the local job market.

Recognizing that the path to a thriving and prosperous city begins with an investment in young children, Starting Strong—comprising Portland Public Schools (PPS), community-based early childhood education providers, Head Start, and other nonprofit child and family service providers—is working to address the barriers to building a sustainable early care and education system for Portland's children and families. Using a collaborative process, Starting Strong partners developed a comprehensive implementation plan to collectively advance their efforts. The plan will allow Portland to develop a clear and practical approach to provide high-quality early learning experiences for all young children, enabling each child to reach success in school and throughout life.

Starting Strong is a network of educators, parents, childcare workers, service providers, health professionals, funders, students, business leaders, and other community members working together to ensure all children in Portland establish the building blocks for a lifetime of learning.

Read more at: portlandstartingstrong.org

Understanding the Need

A number of factors impact children's chances to thrive, and many of these emerge before birth. Early and adequate prenatal care, quality nutrition, healthy housing and physical environments, and regular access to health care represent some of the many critical predictors of well-being. Social factors—such as strong, supportive families, mental health, and connectedness to the community—also weigh in and determine how well children are set up to succeed. To better understand what it takes to support families in raising healthy thriving children in Portland, it is important to have a clear picture of who Portland's children and families are, and what community factors are at play.





As Maine's most populous city, Portland continues to grow

66,649 PEOPLE LIVING IN THE CITY

3,466 CHILDREN UNDER FIVE (5.2% of population in 2016)

MEDIAN AGE OF THE POPULATION: 35.8

PORTLAND IS DIVERSIFYING

While there are ten times as many white residents as any other race or ethnicity, Portland is diversifying.

Children under 6 are even more diverse.

21% BLACK 3% ASIAN Foreign born residents make up approximately 13% of the population
An increase of approximately 2% between 2010–2016, with the largest groups coming from Somalia, East Africa, and Vietnam

8% TWO OR MORE RACES5% LATINO OF ANY RACE

6% OF RESIDENTS
ARE PEOPLE
OF COLOR



Most common foreign languages: African Languages (2,230 speakers)

French (1,520 speakers)

Spanish (1,430 speakers)

Cambodian (270 speakers)

PORTLAND'S FAMILIES ARE WORKING

When compared to the County and State, Portland has a much higher proportion of households in the lower income brackets, and generally fewer households in the upper income brackets.



Income in Portland has increased slowly and steadily.

Median income for families with children in Portland was \$59,118.

More parents of young children (under the age of six) are in the labor force. From 65% in 2010 to 73% in 2016

PORTLAND'S FAMILIES ARE STRUGGLING

Despite the increase in income and number of people in the workforce, families still struggle to meet their basic needs.

Source: See endnote ii

The number of families with children living in poverty has continued to increase

→ 22.6%

NATIONAL AVERAGE: 14%

For single female head of households, that number dramatically increases.

>> 54%

40% of families with children under 18 have received public assistance

For single female head of households, that number dramatically increases. 74%

EARLY LEARNING IN PORTLAND

High-quality early learning programs play an important role in supporting young children and their families. Access to early learning programs allows families to enter the workforce and maintain stable employment. Additionally, many families are challenged by a lack of traditional support networks such as extended family, and may experience feelings of isolation as they balance work and family life. As social networks shift and change, early learning programs become increasingly important resources for families through the comprehensive services offered in such programs.

Early Learning Options in Portland

Portland provides early care and education supports and services designed to respond to the diverse needs and characteristics of young children from prenatal through age five, and their families.

Child Care Centers: A licensed child care center serving more than three children under the age of 13 and not a place of residence. Centers often have a more structured schedule and children are grouped according to age. Staff in a center must be at least 18 years of age and a center director must have experience and/or an educational background in early care and education. Yearly minimum training requirements, including CPR and first aid, must be maintained by staff of the center.

<u>Family Child Care Homes</u>: A licensed family child care provider can care for up to 12 children, depending on the children's ages and whether there is additional help in the provider's home. Yearly minimum training requirements, including CPR and first aid, must be maintained.

<u>Nursery Schools</u>: This type of programming serves children ages three to seven for no more than 3.5 hours per day, two to five days a week. The preschool programming often provides a structured curriculum to an average of 10 children in a group.

<u>Legal-Unlicensed Child Care</u>: Kith and Kin (family and friend) caregivers are considered "legal-unlicensed" if they care for only one or two children in their home.

<u>Head Start</u>: A comprehensive early childhood development program for children, ages three to five, whose family income is at or below the poverty level or who have a disability. Comprehensive services include education, health, nutrition, and social skills. Traditionally Head Start is a part-day, part-year program, operating for 3.5–6 hours per day for 32 weeks a year. Most Head Start programs throughout Maine now offer "wrap-around services," which combine Head Start services with child care services to offer full-day, full-year programs to families.

<u>Public School Preschool:</u> Public school programs (Pre-K) are administered by local public school systems and offer morning or afternoon programs, but not full-day child care. Pre-K classes use nationally validated curricula and follow the Maine State Early Childhood Learning Guidelines. Programs include developmental screening, assessment and referral services, and coordination and transition with school personnel for Individual Education Plans, as needed.

The Current Initiative

The current initiative to expand Portland's Pre-K programs began in 2009, when Portland Public Schools convened a Preschool Task Force with the purpose of exploring options to partner with community-based early learning programs and establish public Pre-K authorized under the school funding formula. This early work – driven by eight core principle – paved the way for the current partnership model, making Portland Public Schools the largest provider in the city with classrooms located in eight district buildings and two community-based settings serving a total of 123 children. Portland Public Schools is committed to the partnership model as it increases the number of available

high-quality seats for the city's four-year-olds, and provides the flexibility to meet the needs of communities and families. Additionally, the model allows for the sharing of space and staffing, reduces duplication of efforts, and leverages state and federal funding to serve the maximum number of children citywide. In order to expand access, and reach the goal of universal Pre-K, the district and its partners recognize the need to coordinate expansion efforts, secure stable and reliable revenue sources, address barriers to families accessing Pre-K, and support providers in delivering high-quality programming.

All learning occurs in the context of relationships

Healthy relationships are built and maintained between families and their children, between children and teachers and between families and teachers. These relationships are critical to children's healthy emotional, social and cognitive development

Families are involved in setting programmatic goals for their children

Programming for children involves families and is built on strengths, rather than needs or deficits. Families and teachers work together to ensure that children's home and school environments are predictable, supportive and responsive to their needs.





Children benefit from hands-on, interactive learning environments that support different learning styles

Children acquire symbolic thought as they represent ideas and knowledge through play, art, block constructions, dramatic play, listening, speaking and writing.

Social skill development is fundamental to a child's ability to access his/her world

Children enter school excited, hopeful and curious. Teachers cultivate these feelings by supporting and encouraging social interactions that are positive and successful. Teachers also help ensure that all children develop the social/emotional skills needed to interact and engage in their preschool setting successfully.



CORE PRINCIPLES



Early learning and development are multi-dimensional

Development in one domain interacts with and influences development in others.
Connections across developmental domains (e.g., physical, cognitive, social, emotional) help children synthesize, reorganize and transform knowledge, as well as develop creative and independent thinking.

Young children are capable & competent

All children are capable of positive developmental outcomes in a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Each brings cognitive, linguistic and emotional understandings connected to the language and culture of his/her home. While unique in the rate of development of skills and competencies, we have high expectations for all children, regardless of background and experience.





Children benefit from exploration in both child-initiated and teacher-selected activities

Children have opportunities to explore materials, engage in activities and interact with peers and adults in ways that cultivate their individual styles, recognize their cultures, stimulate their creativity and help them understand the world around them.



Curriculum is robust and based on accepted evidence-based practices in early language, literacy and numeracy

The curriculum responds to children who need to broaden foundational experiences and build background knowledge, as well as those learning English and those who need challenges to expand prior learning. The curriculum is a precursor to future kindergarten, first and second grade reading, writing and math curriculum and outcomes.

Despite the number of early learning programs available in the city and the expansion of Pre-K, many families are still struggling to access high-quality early learning. According to a recent survey, approximately one-quarter of Portland's kindergarteners had no prior early learning experiences. Working toward the goal of ensuring all Portland's four-year-olds are connected to high-quality Pre-K settings, Starting Strong contracted with the University of Southern Maine to research both the historical and current state of public and private Pre-K classrooms in Portland.

The report used a mixed-method approach to research and data collection, including a review of Portland and PPS demographic data and analysis of PPS data regarding public Pre-K. The report also included a survey of private preschool providers, key informant interviews with preschool and social service providers, and interviews with other districts in the state with public preschool programs. Findings highlighted areas of strength and gaps in Pre-K programming along with a set of recommendations.

University of Southern Maine Recommendations:

- Expand the hours of the PPS Pre-K program and address child care needs
- 2. Hire more multilingual staff
- 3. Increase teacher and staff coaching/training opportunities
- 4. Hire a full-time Pre-K coordinator
- Let early childhood education professionals lead with their wisdom and experience
- 6. Address pay disparity
- 7. Make decisions about the universality of the program and the lottery system
- PPS data development around declines for spots and where students attended preschool



Driven by intent for expansion and using the University of Southern Maine findings, Starting Strong partnered with School Readiness Consulting (SRC) to facilitate the development of the Implementation Plan for Pre-K Expansion in the City of Portland. The plan was developed through extensive stakeholder input from a wide range of early learning providers, district personnel, families, and elected officials. Public workshops and meetings, interviews, and listening sessions were all used to collect key insights about the early learning landscape to inform development of the implementation plan. The process included:

REVIEWING PREVIOUS VISION CASTING AND CURRENT EFFORTS Through a facilitated consensus building process that A review of district and communitybegan with leveraging existing efforts, the Starting based initiatives and an analysis of Strong coalition created a statement for early learning in existing data contributed to an Portland. In addition, the coalition reaffirmed core understanding of the local early principles to further clarify and guide current Pre-K learning context. expansion efforts. • In April 2018, the Starting strong Coalition met with SRC to establish an aspirational vision statement and **IDENTIFYING** set of guiding principles. This process was designed to unify the Coalition in the purpose and goals of the PROMISING PRACTICES work, and the shared values that drive their efforts. An exploration of effective strategies • To guide the public Pre-K expansion efforts, the and lessons learned from Pre-K Starting Strong Coalition reaffirmed the Core expansion efforts in other cities and a Principles established in the Portland Public School review of existing research contributed Preschool Work Plan. to a more complete understanding of what opportunities exist. PREPARING THE SYNTHESIZING **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN** INFORMATION

This implementation plan provides the city with a road map to examine existing efforts, identify new opportunities, and guide decision-making to expand public preschool (Pre-K) access. As a result, the City of Portland will be prepared to prioritize and expand funding, increase coordination, and address the needs of children and families through expanded early learning opportunities that promote positive outcomes for children, families, and the city as a whole.

Information from all of the prior steps was

synthesized to develop a comprehensive

framework which highlighted key findings

and led to the articulation and

prioritization of goals and strategies.

The final plan highlights key data, documents short- and

plan was prepared by SRC and refined through feedback

long-term strategies for Portland and applies action

steps for implementation and metrics of success. The

loops with the coalition and other key stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement, a significant part of the process, has ensured that community values are reflected in both the process and recommendations, strengths are leveraged, and needs are effectively addressed.

- The Starting Strong Leadership Team—Comprising leaders from ConnectED, Portland Public Schools, and community-based early learning programs, the team guided and informed the process. This team provided regular input and shared local contextual information throughout the planning process.
- Starting Strong Coalition Members—Members of the coalition ensured strategies developed throughout the process aligned with and built upon existing efforts in the community. Specifically, coalition members supported the development of the strategies and subsequently offered feedback on the viability of the action steps needed for success, as well as alignment to ConnectEd's larger mission.
- Five Key Stakeholder Interviews—Identified by the Starting Strong coalition, key stakeholders were interviewed
 to identify gaps and new opportunities for Pre-K expansion in Portland. Interviewees included school board
 members, policy makers, and community leaders.
- Family Listening Sessions—More than 30 families were brought together through Portland Empowered, a group that champions student and parent voices with a specific focus on engaging those who have historically been underrepresented. Listening sessions allowed families to share personal experiences with early childhood programming in the city and insight into what is still needed. In addition, the families were able to explore the implementation plan and provide specific input, ensuring a diversity of perspectives.
- Community-Based Feedback Sessions—Local leaders helped prioritize strategies while providing feedback on
 the actions required to meet the goals of the implementation plan. Community leaders provided feedback on target
 setting, governance structures, revenue sources, and policy considerations.







IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

VISION: The City of Portland offers universal access to quality preschool education with community partnerships and through a diverse delivery model with choices for families.

GOALS:
What must be done to ensure all of Portland's 4-year-old have access to Pre-K

STRATEGIES:
Recommended to achieve universal access by 2023

GOAL #1

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEMS – Create a responsive, well-financed and coordinated early childhood system to advance universal Pre-K promoting overall quality, efficiency and impact

STRATEGY 1: Create a public-private council for early learning to oversee the expansion and alignment of policies, programs and funding for universal Pre-K in Portland

STRATEGY 2: Expand the number of Pre-K seats to targeted populations

STRATEGY 3: Implement a funding strategy for universal Pre-k

STRATEGY 4: Increase public awareness and advocacy campaigns linked to strengthening Pre-k and early learning expansion

STRATEGY 5: Implement ongoing continuous improvement processes to measure progress toward goals

GOAL #2

FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS – Increase access to comprehensive supports that affirm the strengths and meet the needs of young children and families in Portland.

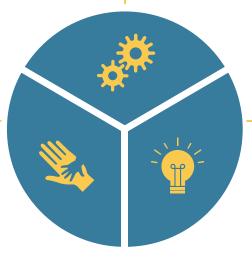
STRATEGY 6: Increase availability of extended hours of care

STRATEGY 7: Expand formal collaborative relationships with existing community-based resources to support the whole family

STRATEGY 8: Incorporate responsive enrollment strategies

STRATEGY 9: Improve the coordination of resources to support children receiving specialized services

STRATEGY 10: Coordinate and expand transportation services



GOAL #3

QUALITY PROGRAMS –
Strengthen Pre-K by ensuring high-quality environments recognized by high levels of teacher preparation and performance.

STRATEGY 11: Increase professional learning supports to implement evidence-based Pre-k curriculum and the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards (MELDS)

STRATEGY 12: Ensure culturally responsive pedagogy and practice within all Pre-K settings

The plan is organized by three goals followed by a series of strategies and related action steps. Strategies and corresponding action steps are organized by level of priority and include partner organizations, along with metrics to measure progress toward Portland's desired outcomes. Details supporting each action step have been included and represent the culmination of research, data collection, and feedback from stakeholder groups (convened by Starting Strong) and Starting Strong leadership.

Comprehensive Systems



Goal #1

Create a responsive, well-financed, and coordinated early childhood system to advance universal Pre-K promoting overall quality, efficiency, and impact

Early learning programs play an important role in connecting families to health, mental health, nutrition, social, economic, and educational supports needed to raise healthy young children. Increased coordination and alignment of these systems have the potential to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of early childhood programming, and to help alleviate critical access gaps that impact the most vulnerable children.

This plan recommends the creation of a public-private advisory committee to continue to convene and guide

Pre-K expansion in Portland. This committee would support the alignment of policies, programs, communications, and funding for universal Pre-K in Portland and would drive the expansion efforts. Once a committee is established, recommendations for consistent policies related to funding, data collection, and public awareness will be made. They will guide the efficacy of programming, as well as bolster funding opportunities. (See Attachment A.)



CREATE A PUBLIC-PRIVATE COUNCIL FOR EARLY LEARNING TO OVERSEE THE EXPANSION AND ALIGNMENT OF POLICIES, PROGRAMS, AND FUNDING FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K EXPANSION IN PORTLAND

[ACTION STEPS]

 Formalize the public-private advisory entity for Pre-K expansion in Portland to oversee the work as outlined in this implementation plan (see Attachment A)

Fall 2018

[PARTNERS]

LEAD PARTNER: Starting Strong

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: The Opportunity Alliance, Portland Public Schools, all accredited child care providers, parent(s), SPED service providers

[METRICS]

- Formalized governance structure and guidelines with MOUs for partner agencies
- Attendance rates
- Bimonthly meeting agendas
- Progress toward metrics throughout strategic plan



EXPAND THE NUMBER OF PRE-K SEATS TO TARGETED POPULATIONS

[ACTION STEPS]

Agreed-upon expansion approach and targets are shared with community	Fall 2018
Complete capacity scan of Portland Public Schools and early childhood programs in Portland to assess: Current capacity and utilization of Pre-K seats Capacity (to include space) to add Pre-K seats Projected costs and supports needed by partners for expansion of Pre-K seats Opportunities to collaborate and maximize resources	Fall 2018
Implement short-term expansion strategy informed by targets and capacity scan (see Attachment B)	Fall 2018
Identify future sites with local partners	Fall 2018

[PARTNERS]

LEAD PARTNER: Starting Strong

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: The Opportunity Alliance, Portland Public Schools, all accredited child care providers, parent(s), SPED service providers

[METRICS]

- Formalized governance structure and guidelines with MOUs for partner agencies
- Attendance rates
- Bimonthly meeting agendas
- Progress toward metrics throughout strategic plan



IMPLEMENT A FUNDING STRATEGY FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K

[ACTION STEPS]

Define true cost of quality preschool programming that includes ongoing quality improvements, programming supports (materials, curricula, assessments), professional development, salaries, benefits, materials, administrative costs, rent, and utilities	Spring 2019 and ongoing
Conduct an analysis (1) of existing local, state and federal revenue supporting current Pre-K system [Title 1 funds; Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) expansion dollars], and (2) to identify the level of additional dollars that will be needed to actualize elements of this implementation plan	Spring 2019 and ongoing
Develop and implement a funding strategy to leverage existing resources and identify new funding opportunities, such as:	Spring 2019 and ongoing

- Expand the use of partnerships, cooperative agreements, and shared services to maximize existing resources
- Advocate for and prioritize investments with additional local, state, and federal funding—in particular ensuring Maine leverages all CCDF revenue
- Engage local businesses and philanthropic organizations to build capacity within systems and finance critical research and innovation
- Explore and assess the need and viability of additional funding options

[PARTNERS]

LEAD PARTNERS: Starting Strong, Portland Public Schools, the Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Elected officials, advocacy organizations, Maine Department of Education, City of Portland, Portland City Council, Portland Education Foundation, philanthropy, local business community

[METRICS]

- Formalized governance structure and guidelines with MOUs for partner agencies
- Attendance rates
- Bimonthly meeting agendas
- Progress toward metrics throughout strategic plan



INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS LINKED TO STRENGTHENING PRE-K AND EARLY LEARNING EXPANSION

[ACTION STEPS]

With feedback from the Pre-K Advisory Council, identify key messages to drive a public awareness campaign strategy to support the importance of Pre-K programming for four-year-olds and align efforts with those that support programming from birth	Spring 2019 and ongoing
Utilize Starting Strong as a forum for strengthening coordination of early childhood advocacy efforts (e.g., developing consistent early childhood legislative priorities, recommendations, etc.)	Spring 2019
Utilize Starting Strong's coalition and staff to serve as a sustainable vehicle for sharing information and soliciting feedback on early childhood–focused efforts	Fall 2019 and ongoing

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: Starting Strong

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: All implementation partners and Protect Our Neighborhood Schools, Maine AEYC, Maine Children's Alliance, UWGP (Thrive 2027), Maine Spark, Right from the Start Coalition

- Development of public awareness campaign
- Number of public awareness campaigns launched
- Development of an early learning advocacy strategy including participation in city council meetings, attendance at legislative sessions, and outreach to the business and philanthropic sectors



IMPLEMENT ONGOING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES TO MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

[ACTION STEPS]

Develop a data plan to determine:	Spring 2019
Collect and analyze data on kindergarten children and families relating to strategic goals and metrics set in implementation plan, to include: Children's educational experiences prior to K Drivers behind families' choices for care (and reasons for declining Pre-K placements) Potential racial, linguistic, and income disparities among enrollments and participation	Fall 2019
Incorporate Pre-K data into the K–12 system (demographic information, pertinent medical records, IFSP/IEP, assessments, etc.)	Fall 2019
Establish data-sharing agreements between local agencies as needed to share pertinent information on children and families (as referred to in Strategy 1)	Fall 2019
Use ongoing data-driven processes and decision-making based on action steps outlined in the implementation plan to modify strategies in plan as necessary	Spring 2020

[PARTNERS]

LEAD PARTNER: Portland Public Schools, the Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:

Portland Public Schools, current partner organizations (YFO, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, TOA)

[METRICS]

- Data sharing agreements /MOUs
- Common kindergarten enrollment form
- Data review strategy for Pre-K sites and Pre-K Advisory Council
- Comprehensive annual report detailing information such as demographics, prior experiences, and children's strengths and needs, to be used to inform classroom instruction and program-level and districtwide decision-making



GOAL #1—ALL THE DETAILS

The following strategies were developed through a scan of the landscape, input from the leadership team, and feedback from various stakeholders. The strategies represent the steps necessary to create a responsive, well-financed, and well-coordinated early childhood system.

Strategy 1: Create a public-private council for early learning to oversee the expansion and alignment of policies, programs, and funding for universal Pre-K in Portland

"I think it makes a lot of sense to make sure that all the groups that are working on this are interested in it, are all aligned and are working as effectively as they can together. Rather than doubling efforts or having blind spots that nobody's covering."

Children and families come into contact with multiple systems throughout the early years. As is the case in many cities nationwide, the need for greater coordination within and across these systems is a persistent challenge in Portland. Increased coordination and alignment have the potential to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of these systems, and to help alleviate critical access gaps that impact the most vulnerable children. Cities across the United States are taking the lead in ensuring that families have access to the early childhood care and education services they need. The most successful efforts to date have adopted a central governance structure to align the various

systems that impact children and families, and take a holistic approach to meeting their needs.

Without intentional planning and action, early childhood programming for children from birth through age five may exist outside of any cohesive structure, unlike public schools where there is often a full spectrum of established governance options—ranging from state boards of education to teachers' unions. As several stakeholders throughout the strategic planning process have noted, the city has a number of groups focused on early childhood issues, ranging from grassroots advocacy efforts to more coordinated literacy campaigns. However, much of this work happens in isolation, resulting in duplication of efforts, missed financing opportunities, and inconsistent messaging to key decision-makers regarding Pre-K. To develop common definitions and goals and take joint action to implement a high-quality, aligned system, Portland's Pre-K requires a centralized body.

Strategy 2: Expand the number of Pre-K seats to targeted populations

"We're still struggling with our location and the school he's allotted for."

Kent County Creates an Independent Entity

Kent County's collaborative efforts to strengthen its early childhood system date back to the early 1990s. Michigan's stateto-local early childhood system structure was established in 2005. Stakeholders in Kent County won a grant from the state and formed a local Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition in 2007. In 2009, the First Steps Commission was created to provide an independent and neutral entity that could lead the community's efforts to strengthen and coordinate early childhood services to better support young children and their families. Kent's Great Start Collaborative is housed within First Steps.

Read more at: https://www.cssp.org/reform/early-childhood/ec-linc/KENT-COUNTY-EC-LINC-profile-final-101714.pdf

For children who are experiencing poverty and other risk factors, participation in high-quality early learning programs has been shown to mitigate the impacts that these conditions have on children's development and chances of success. Despite these well-documented realities, many young children in Portland are not accessing the early learning experiences they need and deserve.

For the first time, in the fall of 2017, Portland Public Schools collected data from kindergarten registration forms about students' preschool program attendance, with the goal of understanding the experiences of students before entering kindergarten. All 10 elementary schools collected and entered data, resulting in a total of 514 responses. As noted by the University of Southern Maine, a majority (74%) of kindergartners (381) attended some type of preschool program before

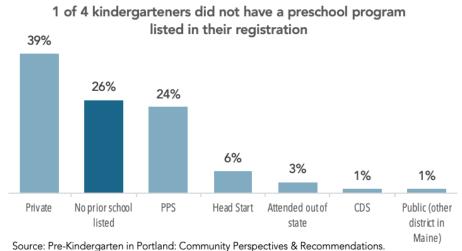
entering school, as indicated by their registration forms. V Of the children who attended a private preschool program, 125, or 63%, attended a Quality for ME Step rated preschool program.

PPS Elementary Schools and Where Students Attended Preschool			
	No prior school listed	Attended PPS Pre-K	Attended private program
East End	19%	30%	25%
Hall School	27%	19%	42%
Lyseth	28%	28%	42%
Reiche	29%	21%	41%
Longfellow	8%	10%	75%
Ocean Avenue	26%	13%	44%
Presumpscot	36%	33%	18%
Reverton	34%	41%	16%

Source: Pre-Kindergarten in Portland: Community Perspectives & Recommendations.

University of Southern Maine: Data Innovation Project

This inaugural data collection effort revealed potential access gaps for many of Portland's children and families. The data revealed an uneven distribution of programming for young children. Not only are more Pre-K seats needed overall, but uneven distribution of programs across the city leaves many middle- and low-income neighborhoods lacking an adequate supply of seats, contributing to a significant access gap in some areas of the city.



University of Southern Maine: Data Innovation Project

The access gaps are even more pronounced when factoring in race. While the data indicate a relatively small number of kindergarten children have had no preschool programming, of those the vast majority are children of color.

Percentage of students who had no prior school/program listed

63% of Asian students

38% of Hispanic or Latino students

26% of students who are two or more races

25% of White students

19% of Black or African American students

Source: Pre-Kindergarten in Portland: Community Perspectives & Recommendations. University of Southern Maine: Data Innovation Project

Other gaps include access to programs for the 31% of English language learners, the 32% of children qualifying for free and reduced lunch, and the 16% of students receiving special education services who had no preschool experience listed on their kindergarten registration forms. However, due to variation in the entry process, it is unclear whether the data indicate the true number of students who did not have a preschool experience or whether the person filling out the registration form unintentionally left it blank, vi pointing to the need for a more consistent and user-friendly collection process.

Programs should be available where they are needed most. A targeted expansion approach allows Portland to focus on individual family risk factors and underserved neighborhoods. Incrementally increasing access to Pre-K acknowledges that

Philadelphia Expands Incrementally

Working toward the goal of universal access, while recognizing the realities of limited resources, Philadelphia initially focused on areas with the highest concentrations of poverty and the lowest number of quality Pre-K slots. Using the latest available data on child poverty, neighborhoods are further targeted based on proportion of children with lead exposure, involvement with DHS, homelessness, low birth weight, inadequate prenatal care, teen parents, and low maternal education.

Read more at:

https://savethechildrenactionnetwork.org/ wp-content/uploads/2017/01/action-tankwhite-paper-11717.pdf Portland may not have the capacity to meet the needs of all families right away and that a phased-in approach has the added benefit of allowing for more flexibility as state and federal funding becomes available.

Based on stakeholder feedback, the first phase of Pre-K expansion will focus on the creation of an additional 112 seats in the Riverton and Presumpscot neighborhoods. Thirty percent of new seats would be reserved for English language learners, students receiving special education services, and students who are not eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Long-term, stakeholders agreed on a target of adding enough Pre-K slots to serve 100% of students who do not currently attend a high-quality preschool program. High quality, for this purpose, is defined as private providers who are rated at either Step 3 or Step 4 in Quality for ME, a Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) voluntary quality rating improvement system (QRIS) used to evaluate the quality of early childhood education programs, Portland Public Schools

Pre-K classrooms, and Head Start. Currently, this target would indicate the need for 250 additional Pre-K seats to be created and subsidized in the next five years.

Strategy 3: Implement a funding strategy for universal Pre-K

Over the years, increased investment in early learning programming has been driven by a growing awareness of the impact of high-quality early learning experiences on young children's outcomes, as well as by working families' needs for the care of young children. This dichotomy of early education as both a workforce support and significant contributor to young children's healthy development has resulted in various public funding sources with different foci that exist independently of one another, such as Early Head Start, Head Start, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Title I, state infant-toddler and Pre-K programs, and local dollars. Because no single federal, state, or local funding source alone is enough to best meet the needs

<u>Pennsylvania Leverages Business</u> <u>Sector Funds</u>

Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) successfully engages the business sector to invest in early childhood education. Through this program, businesses receive a tax credit equal to 75% of their contribution to an approved entity up to \$75,000. The entity must be a section 501(c)(3) organization dedicate at least 80% of their qualified contributions to early childhood education services or improvements. There is also a statewide cap on the total dollars available under the credit, and entities seeking to claim the credit must apply to the state.

Read more at:

http://www.phila.gov/universalprek/Documents/Recommendations%20Report.pdf

of young children and families, programs must maximize public and private sector investments by combining funds from two or more funding streams. Strategies such as "blending" and "braiding" allow programs to integrate and/or align existing funding streams to broaden the impact and reach of the early learning services provided. Vii

The Starting Strong Coalition is in the process of developing an updated and more complete understanding of the true cost of programming both to maximize current dollars and to serve as a foundation for expansion planning. In 2011, PPS estimated the cost of programming in the greater Portland area to be \$10,500 per calendar year, as compared with the perpupil elementary rate of \$8,500 per calendar year. viii While these estimates seem comparable, community partners indicated these estimates may fail to take many costs into account—such as accreditation, supportive services, and the administrative costs of managing funding streams. In fact, the state notes the rate is not based on actual expenditures ix and encourages districts to explore community-based partnerships that may also include funding sources, such as Head Start, Even Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant in order to maximize resources available to children and families through a braided early childhood fiscal system.

It is clear that continuing to utilize federal and state funds is one important component of sustaining and expanding Portland's early learning offerings, and identifying a sustainable local funding mechanism is another. Such a local funding mechanism could offer the flexibility to cohesively address service delivery, workforce development, and systems improvement needs. Such sources utilized in other communities include program-related investments (PRIs), credit enhancement, developer impact fees, tax increment financing (TIF) districts, real estate investment trusts, and qualified section 501(c)(3) bonds. As such, a coordinated effort to identify and align funding streams is imperative to ensuring all families can access the high-quality programming their children deserve.

Strategy 4: Increase public awareness and advocacy campaigns linked to strengthening Pre-K and early learning expansion

"... we need to have the whole community on board because ultimately, the voters vote directly on [the school district] budget and referendum. And as I said they're really supportive and so, I think we just need to make sure that we make the case really strongly to them."

Today there is greater public awareness of the importance of the early years to the long-term health, learning, and success of children and communities coupled with widespread public support for expansion of early learning. Such an awareness helps the city to renew and build upon its longstanding commitment to strengthen all early learning programs and systems and to promote positive outcomes for children starting at birth, and affirms that the path to a thriving and prosperous city of Portland begins with investment in young children.

Multiple important partners, including families, civic organizations, philanthropists, and faith-based groups, play key leadership roles as expansion efforts require decisions about policies and practices that are informed by and responsive to the needs and interests of a broad array of stakeholders. Business leaders are also critical to building public awareness as they hold the potential for wide-ranging supports, from funding and communication to advocacy and outreach.*

As Portland looks to expand Pre-K seats, Portland Public Schools is facing a \$1.1 million funding cut and is working through difficult decisions on programming and staffing. It becomes increasingly important to draw public attention to early learning and to ensure all voices are heard as key decisions are being made. Leveraging growing grassroots efforts and the mayor's focus on education, a unified message will keep early learning on the minds of key decision-makers.

Washington, DC, Builds Public Awareness and Community Support

Washington, DC, established the Universal School Readiness Stakeholder Group (USRSG), made up of more than 200 early childhood and K-12 organizations. The group provided a forum to discuss the challenges faced by the city's early learning programs. USRSG also conducted research and generated reports, allowing city officials to engage in informed discussions and decisions regarding Pre-K expansion. With this foundation, the Pre-K for All DC Campaign could then confidently develop and stick to a plan for how to make the changes everyone wanted to see.

Read more at: https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/Pre-K-for-All-DC-Case-Study.pdf

Strategy 5: Implement ongoing continuous improvement processes to measure progress toward goals

A critical role of the coordinating body is to support the ongoing development of a more complete and aligned set of child and family metrics. Such metrics can be collected across all program entry points (e.g., home visiting, Pre-K, and kindergarten) to understand the relationship between services and impact. Along with a focus on data at the systems level, coordinated data collection and sharing must also occur at the program level.

Data collected at program entry can provide educators, principals, and district leaders with important contextual information about children's prior experiences that can impact future learning and progress in school. By partnering with families to gather additional data, schools can achieve a more complete picture of children's background, strengths, and other features that

make each child unique. This information can be used by educators to effectively support children's learning and development in the classroom. Such information also provides leaders at the system level with more robust data on which to base decisions on services and supports for young children and families.

Current data collection efforts focus on demographics, enrollment, and attendance. Including kindergarten entry assessment results, child progress monitoring, classroom and teacher assessments such as CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System), home visiting data, information related to the workforce, and family needs would allow Portland's Pre-K Community Council to develop a better understanding of the city's early learning landscape.

Vermont Tackles Data Systems

Recognizing that policy makers are consistently faced with important policy, funding, and resource allocation decisions but often lack access to critical data to inform these decisions, Vermont Early Childhood began the Reporting System (ECDRS) to help answer key policy questions. Through statewide meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, key questions were generated to shape the design and development of ECDRS. By maximizing open-source technology to exchange, and access data, as well as policy-related focusing on data, Vermont has opened the door to new partnerships.

Read more at:

http://www.ecedata.org/files/Vermont %20State%20Success%20Story final.pd

Family-Centered Supports



Goal #2

Increase access to high quality Pre-K programs that include or are coordinated with comprehensive supports that affirm the strengths and meet the needs of young children and families in Portland

Programs that have the strongest positive impact on children's growth and development are those that partner with families to make informed decisions about children's learning and care. Access to Pre-K programs with these important characteristics have been shown to promote foundational skills and competencies on which all future learning is built.

For families that are not placed in a public Pre-K classroom at either a school or partner site, the high cost of quality care can be a significant barrier. Uneven distribution by neighborhood of quality programming, lack of transportation, and length of school sites' Pre-K

program day further hamper expansion efforts. Additionally, an increasing number of Portland's families need additional supportive services.

This plan calls for collaboration among PPS, community-based child care providers, Head Start programs, and other service providers to maximize resources, improve and expand services, minimize barriers to implementation, and provide higher-quality programs. Through collaboration, Portland will be better able to share key resources and expertise, offer extended hours of care, and create responsive programs and services for families.



INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF EXTENDED HOURS OF CARE

[ACTION STEPS]

Increase the availability of extended hours of care by prioritizing expansion seats in partnership with child care providers or at community partner sites that offer before- and after-care	Fall 2019
Align the hours of the school-based sites to the elementary school day while ensuring developmentally appropriate practices are in place	Fall 2019
Develop a funding strategy to subsidize before- and after-care programming for Pre-K students at both school-based and partner sites	Fall 2019

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: The Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Portland Public Schools, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, the Opportunity Alliance, Youth and Family Outreach, future partnership sites TBD

- Number of programs offering extended day services
- Number of Pre-K children:
 - o enrolled in before- and after-school care
 - o picked up by a family member or designee



EXPAND FORMAL COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXISTING COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE WHOLE FAMILY

[ACTION STEPS]

Assessment of family need and available services	Fall 2019
Support new partnerships and strengthen communication with community-based organizations to align resources for families	Fall 2019

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: The Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, the Opportunity Alliance, Youth and Family Outreach, future partnership sites TBD

- Completed community asset map
- Number of families connected to and receiving supportive services in connection to their participation in Pre-K programs



INCORPORATE RESPONSIVE ENROLLMENT STRATEGIES

[ACTION STEPS]

Extend Pre-K enrollment window and clarify status in lottery system with rolling notifications	Spring 2019
Develop and implement plan for increasing coordinated recruitment strategies, such as with use of parent community specialists and other targeted support from the Multilingual Multicultural Center to reach diverse families	Spring 2019
Standardize enrollment policies and practices across all school-based and partner sites via a centralized enrollment system	Fall 2020

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: The Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Portland Public Schools, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, the Opportunity Alliance, Youth and Family Outreach, future partnership sites

- Number of on-time enrollments
- Enrollment data of Pre-K partnership programs broken down into demographic categories by year
- Shared enrollment forms



IMPROVE THE COORDINATION OF RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN RECEIVING SPECIALIZED SERVICES

[ACTION STEPS]

Ensure a system-wide approach to transition planning to ensure that case management, child find, evaluation, eligibility determination, IEP development, and the provision of special education and related services are coordinated and seamless, including:

- Assessing the current capacity of the school district to support related services (staffing, professional development, facilities, transportation)
- Establishing formalized agreements to improve coordination between the school district and community-based resources

Fall 2020 and ongoing

[PARTNERS]

LEAD PARTNERS: The Opportunity Alliance and Portland Public Schools

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Child Development Services, Portland Public Schools, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, the Opportunity Alliance, Youth and Family Outreach, future partnership sites

[METRICS]

- Number of children ages three to five receiving special education services
- Number of formalized agreements /MOUs between the school district and community partners



COORDINATE AND EXPAND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

[ACTION STEPS]

Establish shared services agreements for buses/shuttles with community-based providers to supplement transportation options for families, enabling access to available Pre-K seats	Fall 2020 and ongoing
Provide transportation on elementary school buses in the mornings and afternoons for children in school-building Pre-K classrooms	Fall 2020 and ongoing

[PARTNERS]

[METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: TBD

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Portland Public Schools, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, the Opportunity Alliance, Youth and Family Outreach, future partnership sites • Data on chronic absenteeism—to understand whether or not transportation issues have an effect on attendance

• School bus ridership data



GOAL #2—ALL THE DETAILS

The following strategies were developed through a scan of the landscape, input from the leadership team, and feedback from various stakeholders. The strategies represent the steps necessary to create a responsive, well-financed, and well-coordinated early childhood system.

Strategy 6: Increase availability of extended hours of care

"The time difficulty with my work schedule. I can't drop him off and pick him up four hours later. If there were a child care solution it would help."

Many low-wage workers—in particular those working in the service, retail, and hospitality industries—must manage often unpredictable and unstable schedules. Work in these fields is often characterized by inadequate hours, little or no time off, and limited benefits, all affecting workers' incomes, stress levels, and child care options. In a recent report from the Women's Law Center, workers reported that their children were cared for by multiple providers throughout the week, depending on who was available during the hours the workers were scheduled to be at their jobs. Limited wages mean many workers are unable to pay for afterhours care or to hold a regular spot in a child care center that might go unused if these workers were not scheduled on a particular day. XII

Without extended care, many families are forced to choose between early learning and their own participation in the workforce. The current program day varies at each of the Portland Pre-K locations, but typically runs from 8:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. In surveys and interviews conducted as part of the University of Southern Maine report, both public and private providers cited the length of the program day as a challenge for families. Providers are concerned that the current public Pre-K schedule fails to meet the needs of working families. Additionally, the lack of before- and after-school care means families are piecing together care if they are working full time. Xiii Therefore, it

becomes imperative for Portland to facilitate formal partnerships between schools and community-based providers to increase the availability of extended day programs and wraparound care.

<u>San Antonio Offers Options for</u> <u>Extended Hours</u>

Pre-K 4 SA is a full day pre-kindergarten program for San Antonio four-year-olds. San Antonio provides six hours of programming plus an additional three hours in the afternoon and 45 minutes in the morning of extended care hours for families who need wrap-around services during the school year.

Read more at:

https://www.sanantonio.gov/Pre-K-4-

Strategy 7: Expand formal collaborative relationships with existing community-based resources to support the whole family

"I was thinking about also engaging with our multilingual families [before Pre-K] just so that we have some awareness ... so we can start to develop those relationships early on. And develop awareness around what our multilingual needs will be, as far as translation services and things like that."

In Portland, as in many other cities, poverty and other stressors undermine families' ability to provide and care for themselves and their children. Families need access to an array of responsive services that aid both adults and children in meeting basic needs and increasing quality of life. Pre-K programs offer an opportunity to link adults to employment, health, and other social services, as well as language and literacy skills that are necessary to participate in the workforce. Programs also

provide a way to track and assess children's development and emotional well-being and connect them, if needed, to early intervention services.

Pre-K programs in Portland also need to address the types of services and resources specific to the city's growing refugee and immigrant populations. Rather than assuming what these families need, it is important to engage trusted organizations, such as the Multilingual Multicultural Center, as well as families themselves. As needs are identified, collaborative relationships with organizations such as food and clothing banks, libraries, health clinics, and religious groups allow for a regular two-way system of referrals.xiv

"... I feel strongly that until we have capacity to serve all kids, we should be prioritizing the students for whom this will have the biggest impact. And I think there's where I go right back to the data we took six months to collect. And I go to transportation and extended school day, and flexible enrollment as the most critical sticking points for us in the program."

<u>Tulsa, Oklahoma, Takes a Two-Generation</u> <u>Approach</u>

A two-generation approach combines high-quality educational opportunities for young children with strong evidence-based educational, workforce readiness, and parenting programming for families. In addition to providing high-quality early learning programs, the Community Action Program also offers structured and engaging parenting programs. Families are encouraged to participate in all school events throughout the year, including monthly Family Connections meetings covering topics such as nutrition, health, stress management, and life transitions.

Read more at:

https://www.captulsa.org/index.php/who-we-

Strategy 8: Incorporate responsive enrollment strategies

According to the University of Southern Maine (2018), the enrollment process is a barrier to Pre-K enrollment for many families. First, the Pre-K application window is a two-week span in late winter. Families applying after this short time frame are placed on a waiting list. This leads to a second barrier—the lottery system. When classrooms become full or families apply after the application window, they are placed in the lottery. Families then wait until the end of March to find out if and where their child will be offered a seat—which may be outside of their neighborhood. The lottery system makes it challenging for families to make time-sensitive decisions about enrolling or staying in another program or waiting to see if they get into the Pre-K program. As one partner provider noted, even when families are trying to enroll and there are open spaces, families have been forced to go through the lottery system because the enrollment window had passed.xv

Strategy 9: Supports for Children Receiving Special Education Services

Strong connections and collaborative relationships are especially important as recent proposals from the Maine Department of Education (DOE) regarding the provision of children with disabilities ages three years to school age make changes seem imminent. The Maine DOE is proposing a shift from statewide to local administration of special education services for preschool-age children. In addition to providing services, school districts would also become responsible for screening children at those ages to determine whether they're eligible for services.

While the shift from state to local control presents challenges such as a shortage of service providers, a wait list for services, and cost overruns, one of the many benefits is a coordinated approach to screening for developmental concerns, family risk factors, and school readiness at kindergarten entry. Whatever a family's needs are, intervening as early as possible is critical, whether in health care, developmental services, or family support. By leveraging Pre-K expansion efforts and

including the coordination of such services, Portland can better support families facing multiple challenges, who often struggle trying to navigate several systems.^{xvi}

Alameda County Builds Capacity

First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) is an innovative public entity created by the passage of Proposition 10 (Prop 10) in 1998, focused on early childhood education and development-related services for children ages birth to five. By infusing early childhood and family practices into organizations beyond the early childhood field, such as housing, the criminal justice system, and workforce programs, F5AC builds collaborative relationships and ensures greater access to supportive services for children and families.

Read more at:

http://www.first5alameda.org/files/str ategic/F5AC StrategicPlanDesign FINAL

Strategy 10: Coordinate and expand transportation services

"It was difficult to turn down, but with the 1 p.m. stop time it was almost impossible to arrange for travel to another program for the rest of the day."

Children who take the bus to school are three percentage points less likely to be chronically absent (chronically absent children are commonly defined as those who miss around 10% of the school year). These results were not better or worse for specific subgroups (such as low-income families or families with longer commute times). Instead, all children seemed to benefit equally. XVIII Admittedly, bus service is expensive. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2016 that the national average per-pupil expenditure on public bus

transportation was \$961 in 2011–2012.**viii Overall, costs have increased in real dollars more than \$12 million in the past decade. However, the costs of providing bus service must be weighed against the costs of absenteeism and its effects on child outcomes.

<u>Cleveland Considers Transportation</u> Stipends

Limited public transportation options combined with work schedule demands add an extra layer to enrollment and attendance barriers. Awareness of this barrier prompted Cleveland to consider establishing a system of transportation, public transportation stipends, or grants for providers to purchase vans.

Read more at: http://pre4cle.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/PRE4CLE-Plan.pdf

Removal of transportation barriers is especially important to immigrants and refugees. While their children make up a growing share of the children in our nation's schools, their enrollment in early education continues to lag behind that of their peers born in the United States. Xix The reality of the barrier is reflected in interviews with immigrant families. In a report conducted by New Americans, the number one reason given by refugee and immigrant families for declining a space was transportation. Many families have just one car and therefore do not always have the ability to drop off and pick up their children, especially at the times needed for the Pre-K program. XX

Portland's Pre-K programs do not provide transportation, nor do many of the early learning programs in the city. The burden is put on families to provide safe transportation to get their children to and from school on time every day, regardless of weather, neighborhood security, work schedules, and other challenges.

Quality Programs



Goal #3

Strengthen Pre-K by ensuring high-quality environments recognized by high levels of teacher preparation and performance

Children in today's classrooms are more diverse than ever before. They reflect a range of cultures, customs, languages, abilities, and interests. In addition, each individual child brings unique characteristics that impact his or her ability to learn. In order to meet the needs of all young learners, early learning programs have been challenged with building and sustaining comprehensive, high-quality teaching and learning environments.

Studies have shown that early childhood teachers who are culturally competent, and those who share racial and cultural characteristics with children from vulnerable communities, are often better prepared to provide these children with high-quality, strengths-based early childhood experiences. However, preparation gaps along racial lines result in a limited pipeline for teachers of

color in early learning programs nationally and within Maine. Also, career pathways for early learning professionals are notoriously disjointed and difficult to navigate, particularly for the nontraditional and inservice adult learners who are so prevalent in the early learning field.

This plan calls for the creation of a Pre-K coordinator position, allowing for better aligned professional learning opportunities delivered through a jobembedded coaching model. Also recommended is an increase in the number of opportunities focused on developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive professional development. Finally, the plan details the need to address employment and career advancement opportunities for ethnically and linguistically diverse teachers and leaders.



INCREASE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SUPPORTS TO
IMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE AND
EVIDENCE-BASED PRE-K CURRICULUM AND THE MAINE EARLY
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS (MELDS)

[ACTION STEPS]

Create a Pre-K coordinator position to support programs' and teachers' ability to implement developmentally appropriate practice and evidence-based Pre-K curriculum, align teaching practices to MELDS, and share successful strategies	Fall 2019
Increase shared professional development opportunities focused on MELDS and evidence-based curriculum implementation (e.g., workshops, coaching and ongoing training, etc.) offered at partnership sites and other community-based programs	Spring 2020

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: The Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS:

Portland Public Schools, PPS Multilingual Multicultural Center, Youth and Family Outreach, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, other partnership programs TBD

- Number and type of professional development opportunities
- Pre-K coordinator job description
- Identification of Pre-K coordinator
- Number of coaching and/or supervision visits received by classroom teachers



ENSURE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE WITHIN ALL PRE-K SETTINGS

[ACTION STEPS]

Expand shared professional development opportunities offered via the Multilingual Multicultural Center focused on cultural and linguistic responsive practice	Fall 2019
Vet various approaches and research-based training curricula (e.g., Bridges Out of Poverty and Strengthening Families) to be offered by multiple agencies/organizations	Fall 2019
Develop recommendations to advance employment and career opportunities for teachers and leaders of color and those who are multilingual, to reflect child demographics	Spring 2020

[PARTNERS] [METRICS]

LEAD PARTNER: The Opportunity Alliance

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: Portland Public Schools, PPS Multilingual Multicultural Center, Youth and Family Outreach, Catherine Morrill Day Nursery, other partnership programs TBD

- Number of professional learning opportunities focused on culturally responsive strategies
- Identification and use of curricula and strategies in classrooms
- Current cultural and linguistic diversity of Pre-K teachers
- Number of teachers of color
- Number of bilingual/multilingual teachers

GOAL #3—ALL THE DETAILS

The following strategies were developed through a scan of the landscape, input from the leadership team, and feedback from various stakeholders. The strategies represent the steps necessary to create a responsive, well-financed, and well-coordinated early childhood system.

Strategy 11: Increase professional learning supports to implement developmentally appropriate practice and evidence-based Pre-K curriculum and the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards (MELDS)

"It used to be when we had these weekly professional development sessions, we were able to be really all in line with what we were doing for our assessments, and then that had sort of broke up the last couple of years, and new teachers came on and things like that. So, because of that lack of program coordinator, there really wasn't anybody to oversee what was being done, and so now there's different assessments used in every classroom, whereas five years ago, four years ago, even up to three years ago, all the assessments were the same, and they were all done around the same time, and they were consistent. Now they're just not."

Research and experience support the notion that teachers and others who care for young children (birth through age eight) play a critical role in supporting their learning success. XXI Most stakeholders today agree that quality early learning environments must be coupled with intentional and developmentally appropriate instruction to enhance positive child outcomes, and, to

that end, the ultimate goal of professional learning must be to support high-quality teaching that supports young children's optimal growth and development. xxiii

Policy briefs and other publications recommend that professional learning investments should target integrated and cross-sector systems of professional development. xxiii As the field continues to evolve, other recommendations for consideration include ensuring that the type and intensity of the professional learning experiences are aligned with desired outcomes (knowledge transfer, skill acquisition, clarification, etc.). Skill development and experiential or practice-based forms of professional learning have been recommended as well, including provision of systematic follow-up implementation supports. Systematic followup implementation supports refer to professional learning that extends over time and includes practice, support, and feedback in applied contexts (e.g. coaching, mentoring, consultation, communities of practice, and peer support groups).xxiv

Recognizing the importance of professional learning opportunities, Portland Pre-K leveraged federal and local grant funds not only to expand the number of Pre-K slots, but also to offer weekly professional learning opportunities for all Pre-K teachers. Sessions focused on ensuring effective implementation of curriculum through education, training, and coaching. When surveyed in May 2014, teachers commented that weekly meetings helped to "develop a strong cohort in which we are all able to learn from each other's expertise," and that "weekly check in with teachers, discussing effective teaching strategies, aligning activities with all programs has been a tremendous benefit."**XXV Because of a lack of funding, as well as the need for dedicated staff to coordinate, deliver, and monitor professional learning

opportunities, individual Pre-K partner sites are left to figure this out on their own. The lack of coordination is resulting in some teachers not attending trainings at all and little consistency across the Pre-K sites in the type, frequency, and quality of trainings received by teachers.

hard. That was actually one of the things that was pointed on the state monitoring report, was that the curriculum was not consistent."

New York City Focuses on Classroom Educators

One of the standards of New York City Pre-K for All specifically focuses on cultivating collaborative teachers through professional practice and leadership development. On-site professional development and coaching based on New York State Pre-K learning standards are used in conjunction with teacher observation, classroom visits, and trainings designed specifically to address the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Read more at:

https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/reports/2014/Ready-to-Launch-NYCs-Implementation-Plan-for-Free-High-Quality-Full-Day-Universal-



"[A teacher from the] Multilingual [Multicultural Center] would come in at least once a month and talk to us about working with ELL students, and how to suss out whether it's a speech delay, or it's because they're learning a second language. Things like that, currently not all the classrooms are using the same curriculum, so it's kind of



6 Principles of Culturally Responsive Practice

The term *culturally responsive* or *culturally relevant practice* was conceived by Gloria Ladson- Billings¹ and is used to describe teaching practices that are informed by students' lives and that support children's and families' diversity. In support of this effort, National Association for the Education of Young Children has led the "Engaging Diverse Families" project in order to identify successful policies and practices for early learning programs to effectively engage diverse families. From this work, six operating principles were developed, which characterize programs that are exemplary in their efforts to engage families.¹

Principle 1: Programs invite families to participate in decision-making and goal-setting for their child. Programs invite families to actively take part in making decisions concerning their children's education. Teachers and families jointly set goals for children's education and learning both at home and at school.

Principle 2: Teachers and programs engage families in two-way communication. Strategies allow for both school- and family-initiated communication that is timely and continuous. Conversations focus on a child's educational experience as well as the larger program. Communication takes multiple forms and reflects each family's language preference.

Principle 3: Programs and teachers engage families in ways that are truly reciprocal. Programs and families benefit from shared resources and information. Programs invite families to share their unique knowledge and skills and encourage active participation in the life of the school. Teachers seek information about children's lives, families, and communities and integrate this information into their curriculum and teaching practices.

Principle 4: Programs provide learning activities for the home and in the community. Programs use learning activities at home and in the community to enhance each child's early learning and encourage and support families' efforts to create a learning environment beyond the program.

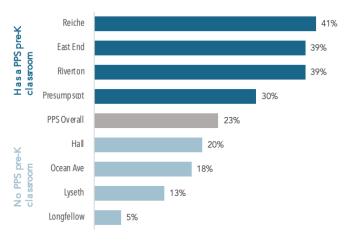
Principle 5: Programs invite families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts. Programs invite families to actively participate in making decisions about the program itself. Programs also invite families to advocate for early childhood education in the wider community.

Principle 6: Programs implement a comprehensive program-level system of family engagement. Programs institutionalize family engagement policies and practices and ensure that teachers, administrators, and other staff receive the supports they need to fully engage families.

Culturally responsive practices are necessary as Portland, the most populous city in Maine, continues to grow. Both public and private Pre-K providers have a significant number of children in their classrooms speaking a variety of languages. In fact, in four of the five school district sites where Pre-K classrooms are located there is a higher percentage of English language learners (ELL) than the percentage in Portland Public Schools overall.^{xxvi}

Percentage of elementary students who are English Language Learners

(within overall school population, SY 2015-2016)



Source: Pre-Kindergarten in Portland: Community Perspectives & Recommendations. University of Southern Maine: Data Innovation Project

Both public and private Pre-K providers in Portland report that the recent increase in cultural and linguistic diversity provides unique challenges beyond typical language barriers. Many immigrant and refugee families need support not only in navigating the child care system (applications, enrollment, subsidies, transportation), but in gaining an understanding of new roles and expectations in American society. Through support from Portland Public Schools' Multilingual Multicultural Center, one multilingual teacher has been working with school and partner Pre-K staff to provide support for teachers, children, and families; however, additional support is needed.

Studies have shown that early childhood teachers who are culturally competent, and those who share racial and cultural characteristics with children from vulnerable communities, are often better prepared to provide these children with high-quality, strengths-based early childhood experiences. However, preparation gaps along racial lines result in a limited pipeline for teachers of color in early learning programs nationally and in Maine. Also, career pathways for early learning professionals are notoriously disjointed and difficult to navigate, particularly for the nontraditional and inservice adult learners who are so prevalent in the early learning field. These systemic issues are not isolated to Portland, but will require locally specific strategies to mitigate their impact on the local early learning system.

Pre-K classes must build practices that honor the role of families' culture, language, and experience in supporting their children's learning and development. As not all teachers will represent a cultural match or be native speakers of the home language of all children, researchbased strategies, such as providing linguistically responsive materials and working toward implementing an anti-bias curriculum, should be part of a culturally responsive approach. Programs should also community members-including families community leaders—who share the culture of children in the classroom or speak the home language, and who could be trained to provide support and assistance in the classroom.xxvii

<u>Seattle Prioritizes Dual-Language</u> Curriculum

The Seattle preschool implementation plan focuses on culturally responsive programming, particularly for dual-language learners. Supports offered to teaching staff to earn bilingual certification, along with ongoing professional development, build capacity in partner programs. Additionally, providers in Seattle's preschool program must execute a culturally relevant annual plan for partnering with families with a goal of improving child outcomes.

Read more at:

http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Depart ments/OFE/AboutTheLevy/EarlyLearning/SP

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Attachment A

Starting Strong Pre-K Advisory Council

Vision:

Portland offers universal access to quality public preschool education with community partnerships and through a diverse delivery model with choices for families.

Measures to determine the success of the coordinated planning process may include:

- Increased enrollment among target populations in programs meeting high quality standards
- Improved kindergarten readiness as measured by Teaching Strategies Gold
- Sustainable revenue for Pre-K in Portland
- Increased alignment and coordination among implementation partners

Governance:

- Agreed-upon representation and participation from agency leaders
- Independence from changes in political leadership

Responsibilities:

- Advise and monitor the implementation of the 2018 Pre-K Expansion Strategic Plan
- Identify, collect, and analyze data from implementation partners to measure progress toward the identified goals of the plan
- Guide the shared vision of the components needed to ensure all children and families have access to Pre-K in Portland
- Build a consensus definition of school readiness and advocate for alignment of resources and services toward increasing results
- Regularly convene stakeholders to provide information, improve or alter existing strategies and action steps, and provide information on progress toward outcome measures
- Identify and advocate for new sources of funding for the core components of the system with federal, state, and local partners
- Advise and guide key community messaging and advocacy efforts
- Advise and advocate for appropriate policy development

Membership:

- PPS Administrator
- PPS School Committee Member
- Parent Representative
- Multicultural/Multilingual Parent Representative
- Head Start Administrator
- Center-Based Child Care Director
- Home-Based Child Care Director
- Special Education Representative (Community-Based Agency Director and/or CDS)
- Philanthropic Representative
- Pre-K Teacher

Staffing:

Starting Strong (Director and/or additional support) Starting Strong communications support

Meeting frequency:

Bimonthly

Attachment B

(Lead Agency proposal and business plan)

Attachment C

Targets for Pre-K Expansion

Potential Target	Estimated number of currently unserved students
→ 100% of students in high needs neighborhoods (where > 33% of children don't attend preschool, currently Riverton & Presumpscot neighborhoods), regardless of socioeconomic status	39
→ 100% of all free/reduced lunch eligible (FRL) students	79
→ 100% of all FRL students AND 100% of English language learners (ELL)	82
→ 100% of all FRL students AND 100% of English language learners (ELL) AND 100% of students needing special education services (SP ED)	88
→ 100% FRL & ELL & SP ED students AND reserve 30% of new slots for students who are not FRL eligible (reflecting current demographic target for public PreK classrooms)	112 (79 FRL + 33)
→ 100% of students who don't currently attend preschool, regardless of socioeconomic status	133
→ 100% FRL & ELL & SP ED students AND reserve 46% of new slots for students who are not FRL eligible (reflecting city-wide demographic average)	148 (79 FRL + 69)
→ 100% of students who don't currently attend "high-quality" preschool (either Step 3 or 4 QRIS, Head Start, Public Pre-K), regardless of socioeconomic status	250

END NOTES

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