



# Implementation Update

Spring 2024

Preschool for All came from a unique community-based process where more than 100 people came together to create a vision for Multnomah County children and their families. This thoughtful policy-making took two years and included educators, parents, and preschool providers alongside leaders from business, school districts, higher education, philanthropy, culturally specific organizations, and healthcare. At its core, Preschool for All means that families can choose a preschool option that is joyful, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate, regardless of their income.

**Preschool for All is on track – exceeding our slot goals in both of our first two years and building to universal preschool access in 2030!**

Implementation takes time, and Preschool for All has been nimble and responsive as we build a new system, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that deeply damaged the child care industry. We're making thoughtful investments that will create future capacity, alongside investments in preschool slots today. Preschool for All is on track to meet its short- and long-term goals and we are excited to share updated details of our work so far!

## This year...

PFA is contracting with **52** preschool providers at **82** sites in **18** zip codes across the county.

These include **21** child care centers, **37** home-based locations, and **24** schools.

Almost **1,400** children have access to inclusive, free, joyful, and culturally responsive preschool.

Next year, that number will increase to over **2,000**!



# Free Public Preschool Meets an Urgent Need in Our Community

Preschool plays a crucial role in early childhood development, providing a foundation for cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Research consistently shows that quality preschool experiences enhance school readiness, leading to improved academic outcomes and increased chances of long-term success. Preschool helps build a strong educational foundation, providing children with engaging learning activities and fostering essential social skills.

Preschool improves life-long health, educational, economic, and social outcomes for individual children and their families, and it also provides a high rate of return on the public's investment: for every dollar spent on high-quality preschool, the community sees a return of between \$7 and \$10<sup>1</sup>. Investments in early childhood education programs reach far beyond individuals and families, saving money on costly interventions later in life and increasing the entire community's economic prosperity for generations to come.



**Preschool benefits children and families, caregivers, employers, and the community as a whole.**

There is growing income inequality locally and nationally, and Multnomah County is an expensive place to live. In addition, Oregon consistently ranks as one of the most expensive states in the nation for preschool. Before Preschool for All, public dollars only provided preschool for the families in deepest poverty, reaching under 20% of Multnomah County's 3- and 4-year-olds. Quality preschool has been out of reach for many families, and far too many children in our community have been denied the crucial and well-known benefits preschool provides.

Preschool opportunities have significant intergenerational effects on education, employment, and health<sup>2</sup>. When parents have affordable and reliable care, they can further their career, devote more time to other responsibilities, and pursue higher levels of education. Maternal workforce participation increases with preschool access<sup>3</sup>, making programs like PFA effective and immediate anti-poverty strategies. Parents benefit from the support and expertise of their children's preschool teachers, learning about healthy child development, how to nurture social-emotional growth, and ways to continue children's learning at home.

For every dollar spent on high-quality preschool, the community sees a return of between



**\$7**  
and  
**\$10**

Employers also benefit from investments in early childhood care and education. The high cost of market-based child care pushes qualified staff, especially women,

<sup>1</sup> García, Heckman, Leaf and Prados, Quantifying the Life-Cycle Benefits of an Influential Early-Childhood Program, Journal of Political Economy, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Heckman and Karapakula, Intergenerational and Intragenerational Externalities of the Perry Preschool Project, NBER, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Center for American Progress, The Effects of Universal Preschool in Washington, D.C., Children's Learning and Mothers' Earnings, 2018

out of the workforce. Parents with reliable and affordable child care tend to miss less work, have increased productivity, and have lower levels of stress overall.<sup>4</sup>

Our community recognized the need for – and huge benefits of – public preschool, and in November 2020, passed Preschool for All with a vote of nearly two to one. The initiative is funded by a personal income tax of 1.5% to 3% on income above a threshold applying only to the highest-income earners who live or work in Multnomah County. This tax went into effect on January 1, 2021, and as written in the ballot measure, the rate is scheduled to increase by 0.8% in 2026. We go into [more detail about our budget and revenue](#) on our website.

**Economists love early childhood programs, because they pay off hugely when done well. You can accomplish so much with early childhood education and care.**

**It's a two-generation anti-poverty strategy that benefits all participating children and their families, as well as the local economy. And we have the best program in the country. If you study what's out there, Preschool for All is better than all the rest.**

**- Mary King, PSU, Emerita  
Professor of Economics**



## Serving Families

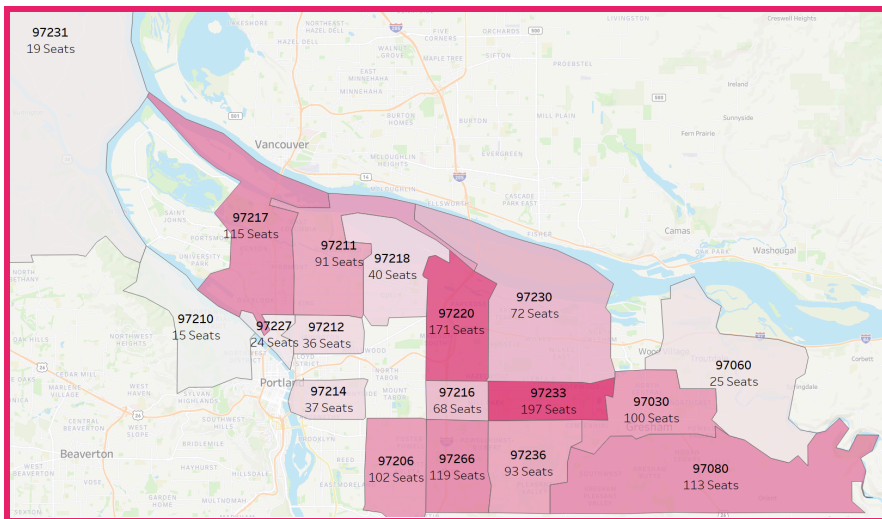
Multnomah County's Preschool for All is funding almost 1,400 slots in 82 preschool programs around the county this year. This outcome exceeded our Year 2 goal by 27%.

Pilot Site Providers are reimbursed \$15,750-22,050 per slot depending on their calendar (year-round or school-year) and schedule (full day or school day). The largest share of this funding goes toward paying staff and providing benefits. It also covers the other costs involved in running a preschool site, including rent and utilities, insurance, food, and learning materials.



<sup>4</sup> Harvard Business Review, Childcare Is a Business Issue, 2021





The map to the left shows the number of Year 2 slots by zip code. Darker pink represents a higher number of slots. PFA will grow over time, increasing the number of children it serves each year. As new providers are added, the geographic diversity of sites will also increase. With full universality in Fall 2030, all three- and four-year-olds whose families would like to enroll them will be able to participate in a free public preschool slot through PFA, Head Start, or Preschool Promise.

As Preschool for All grows to universal, our outreach and application processes prioritize children who have the least access to quality, affordable preschool options. Over the last two years, we have successfully enrolled families from our priority populations. Below are details about children enrolled in Preschool for All for the 2023-24 year:

**22%** are children who have developmental delays or disabilities

**89%** are from families with incomes at or below the self-sufficiency standard

**6%** live with a foster parent or legal guardian



**6%** of enrolled families are experiencing homelessness

**73%** identify as Black, Indigenous, or Children of Color

**38%** speak a language other than English at home

**44** different languages are spoken in the homes of PFA families!





## Accessibility & Family Choice

Family choice is a key value in the design of Preschool for All. Families in Multnomah County want to be able to send their child to preschool in a setting that feels comfortable to them, reflects their culture, communicates in their language, and meets the needs of their schedule. Preschool for All created a mixed delivery system, which means one that includes home-based family child care, child care centers, and preschool in school buildings. A mixed delivery system provides options that work for a wide variety of families, while also investing in small child care businesses, many of which are owned by Black and Brown women and women who speak languages other than English.

**It's been amazing. Beyond the freedom that it gave us to go to preschool, beyond the finance element, there is this other comfort that we felt knowing that this program had our back.**

**- Ariana Arena, Parent**



We've established an online application portal and funded culturally specific agencies that utilize their experience, community trust, and cultural and linguistic expertise to provide outreach to Preschool for All priority populations. PFA-funded navigators at four Family Connector Organizations – Self Enhancement, Inc.; Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization; Latino Network; and Native American Youth & Family Center – help families through the application and enrollment process, and also connect PFA families with other needed community resources.

**Seventy-six percent of current PFA students were able to enroll in their family's first choice preschool, and 93% enrolled in one of their top three choices!**



I was really dreading the process, thinking, 'I really just can't do one more thing,' but then I got through it and it was SO easy and straightforward.”



Last year I applied by myself online, but this year a support person reached out to me and helped me apply. It was so nice!



*- Feedback from 2023 PFA Applicants*

## Inclusion

Inclusion is a core value of Preschool for All. We ask providers to continually learn and develop their practices so that all children are fully included in classroom instruction and activities alongside their peers. Families whose children have disabilities face more barriers in finding and accessing early learning and care and are asked to leave care three times more often than others.<sup>5</sup> Children who are suspended or expelled from preschool programs miss out on valuable learning and developmental opportunities and may experience emotional stress with lasting impact.<sup>6</sup> Preschool for All bans the suspension and expulsion of three- and four-year-olds, which is a pervasive practice disproportionately affecting Black and Brown children and children with disabilities.

PFA matches each provider with a coach who focuses on foundational early learning strategies and supportive classroom environments. In addition, each site is matched with an Inclusion Coordinator who can offer guidance, help with resource referrals, and coordinate supports. Preschool for All providers can access additional funding to hire extra staff or purchase materials that will support the learning of children with disabilities. We also fund an Early Childhood Mental Health team at the County Health Department that can help with classroom interventions, social and emotional learning, and mental health referrals.

## Strengthening and Expanding the Early Childhood System

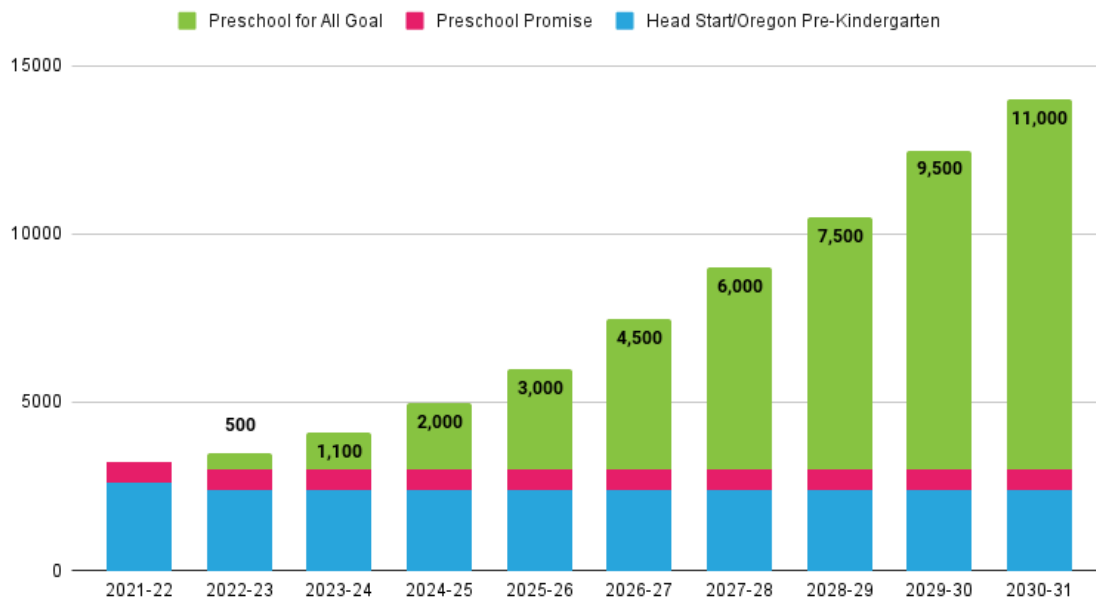
Preschool for All was designed in partnership with the community, and our community was clear: *how* we do this work matters. We need to prioritize inclusivity, cultural responsiveness, and collaboration with both families and the diverse set of early learning providers who have been doing this work for years. The ultimate goal is universal preschool access, and intentional growth is the most effective path. Preschool for All's timeline was designed to allow for system supports to be put in place as the number of slots grows and to mitigate the negative effects of expanding too rapidly, which can include losing infant and toddler slots in the community and putting small programs out of business.

<sup>5</sup> Pears, K.C., Bruce, J., and Scheidt, D., Oregon Preschool Development Grant Birth to Age 5 Strengths and Needs Assessment: 2022 Statewide Household Survey Results, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Early Childhood Suspension & Expulsion Program Report to the Legislature, Oregon Department of Early Learning & Care, January 2024

## Preschool for All builds on and doesn't replace state and federal investments in preschool, such as Preschool Promise and Head Start.

The graph below shows how the number of public preschool slots grows over time.



\* The estimate of 11,000 PFA slots is based on the projection of the population of 3- and 4-year-olds by 2030, as well as what we've learned from other jurisdictions about the proportion of families – just over three-fourths – that we anticipate will want to enroll their children in a universal preschool program.

## Building toward universal preschool access is not as simple as paying for preschool slots.

After the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the child care industry became clear, Preschool for All stayed committed to creating universal access to publicly funded preschool by 2030 and adjusted the yearly slot goals prior to that year, in order to have a realistic growth timeline. As of October 2023, there still are 20% fewer child care<sup>7</sup> providers open in Multnomah County than there were prior to the pandemic.

There are currently not enough classroom spaces or enough teachers to serve every child in the county. In order to reach our goals, we're investing in infrastructure development and teacher recruitment and training. And we're

<sup>7</sup>Find Child Care Oregon (FCCO) Database, October 2023



proud to say that we're on track and meeting our planned slot benchmarks. We're increasing the number of slots each year and building a sustainable system that focuses on racial equity, while also making investments that provide the foundation for future growth.

## Preschool for All offered over 700 slots in the 2022-23 year and just under 1,400 in the 2023-24 year, exceeding both our Year 1 and Year 2 slot goals!

The community members and educators behind Preschool for All knew it wasn't enough to just fund slots – system support resources would be necessary to achieve their vision. These resources include higher wages for early educators, coaching and professional development, funding to stabilize infant and toddler care, investments in recruitment and retention of a skilled and diverse workforce, and support for the expansion of child care facilities across Multnomah County.

### Wages

Early educators have long been undervalued and underpaid, in spite of their essential role in children's development and the economic health of our community. Many child care workers across the country qualify for public benefits and can't afford high-quality care for their own children.<sup>8</sup> Preschool for All wage requirements are significantly higher than the state average, and the target salary for lead teachers is comparable to the average wage of kindergarten teachers. The median hourly wage for a child care worker in Oregon is \$16.20.<sup>9</sup> The minimum wage for a preschool assistant at a PFA site is \$20.91 per hour, and the target salary for a lead teacher with a BA or Step 10<sup>10</sup> is \$37.48 per hour.

PFA staff make at least **\$4** more per hour than the median wage for a child care worker in Oregon.



### Facilities

PFA provides start-up funds to Pilot Sites that have enabled existing preschool programs to make necessary upgrades to their spaces in order to meet licensing requirements and create engaging environments for young learners. With these funds and the stability of Preschool for All payments, 20% of our Year 1 providers expanded their business into a new facility for Year 2.

The Preschool for All Facilities Fund launches this spring with \$16 million this year to assist providers with improving their spaces and increasing their capacity. BuildUp Oregon, a coalition of Community Development Financial Institutions, will administer the fund and offer technical assistance for qualifying providers seeking to improve, preserve, or expand their facilities. They'll also work with developers and providers to increase the number of

<sup>8</sup> University of Oregon Rapid-EC Project, Who is Providing for Providers, 2021

<sup>9</sup> Oregon Wage Data: [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_or.htm#39-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_or.htm#39-0000)

<sup>10</sup> Oregon Registry Online, the career lattice for early educators, awards a sequence of 12 steps based on training and education.

preschool facilities co-located in affordable housing.

We anticipate that there will need to be roughly 4,000 newly licensed slots and school district slots in the community before 2030. So far, Preschool for All has already added over 500 of the needed 4,000 slots. The Facilities Fund will accelerate the development of these new slots.

### **Infant/Toddler Stabilization Funds**

PFA also provides stabilization funds to sites offering infant and toddler care, increasing wages and benefits for educators who work with 0- to 3-year-olds. This is a key lesson from other communities who have expanded preschool access and essential when Multnomah County is considered a child care desert<sup>11</sup> for infant and toddler care. New York City saw up to a one-fifth reduction of available infant and toddler care after implementation of universal preschool, which primarily affected high poverty areas.<sup>12</sup> Stabilization funding keeps more infant and toddler slots available in the community and helps retain educators in the early childhood field.

### **Recruiting & Supporting Diverse Early Educators**

Successful implementation relies on a robust workforce of early childhood educators. Historically, low wages have discouraged interested candidates from joining the field. With programs like Preschool for All prioritizing a living wage, that is beginning to change.

PFA funds [bilingual navigator positions](#) at Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College to recruit and retain students in their early childhood education programs. We have also established the Hadiyah Miller Memorial Scholarship Fund with awards for students interested in joining or advancing their career in the field of early childhood education, and funded scholarships to Portland State University's [Indigenous First Steps program](#), a 12-credit certificate program that uses Native language, culture, histories, and oral stories to promote culturally sustaining early learning.

**Over 800 current and future early educators are expected to participate in our workforce development programs this year.**

Additional efforts include the creation of a substitute teacher pool so that educators can participate in professional development, and culturally relevant career coaching and support from the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). Because of Preschool for All's higher wages, Worksystems, which serves as the regional Workforce Development Board, recently recognized Early Childhood Education as an "emerging industry." With this designation and funding from Preschool for All, Worksystems will create new pathways for job seekers interested in a career in early education.

---

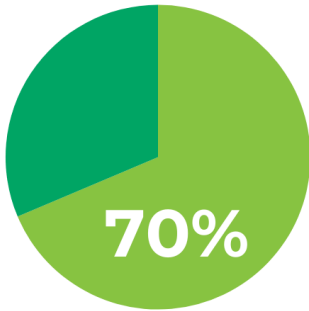
<sup>11</sup>Pratt, M., Sektnan, M., Oregon's Child Care Deserts, 2022

<sup>12</sup> Early Care and Education Consortium, 2021

## Pathways

Our Pathways Program, designed to help providers prepare to apply for Preschool for All slots, has partnered with more than 100 preschool providers so far to support quality improvement and professional growth including training and educational opportunities, business development, peer networks, and individualized coaching. Fifty percent of the new PFA providers in 2023-24 had previously participated in PFA's Pathways Program!

## Supporting Small, Culturally Diverse Businesses



Seventy percent of the owners and directors of PFA's Year 2 home-based and small center Pilot Sites identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color

We've focused much of our planning on ensuring that home-based child care providers are able to authentically participate in Preschool for All. These small businesses are the most culturally and linguistically diverse group of preschool providers in Multnomah County. They also experience the most barriers when it comes to building and strengthening their businesses. For this reason, we've partnered with Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) to support in-home and small centers as they navigate their new Preschool for All contracts and strengthen their businesses.

In Multnomah County, many of the independent multi-site centers started as home-based family child care. Family Child Care is an incubator for entrepreneurs in this field. With stable funding from Preschool for All and access to capital dollars from the PFA Facilities Fund, many more small businesses will have the chance to expand and to serve more children.



**Preschool for All gave me the stability to hire my teachers, to offer them good salaries, good benefits. And families are happy because this is free! They have safe and quality child care.**

**- Karen Messner, Provider**



## Paying for Preschool for All

PFA is funded by a personal income tax of 1.5% on taxable income over \$125,000 for individuals and \$200,000 for joint filers, and an additional 1.5% on taxable income over \$250,000 for individuals and \$400,000 for joint filers. The ballot measure includes a rate increase of 0.8%, currently scheduled for 2026. The tax is collected by the City of Portland and the program is administered by Multnomah County's Department of County Human Services. Less than 10% of tax filers in Multnomah County are expected to meet the income threshold to pay the PFA tax.

Personal income varies widely year to year for many high-income earners. Changes in the economy can result in dramatic changes in personal income, especially for income derived from capital gains and other non-wage sources – things like selling an asset, such as stocks. Personal income tax is therefore a volatile revenue source that will fluctuate dramatically over time.

With this in mind, and in order to meet our commitment to voters, Preschool for All matches revenues and expenditures over time to plan for the entire implementation of the program, rather than matching revenue to expenses one year at a time. As the number of preschool slots increases, the yearly revenue will not keep up with the anticipated expenses. The program was designed so that money is set aside during the early years of implementation, when slot numbers remain lower. These dollars are dedicated savings for Preschool for All and will be used during the years when slot numbers are much higher and large deficits of up to \$60 million per year are expected. By FY 2036, yearly revenue is expected to fully cover the cost of yearly expenses.

Dedicated savings will ensure that PFA can provide consistent levels of high-quality preschool for Multnomah County families across the life of the initiative. Dedicated savings allow Preschool for All to plan ahead and save now to mitigate future budget shortfalls and avoid interruptions in service delivery to families.

**Dedicated savings that accumulate in the early years will all be needed in the later years as the program grows to full universality.**

Oregon Public Broadcasting reported on the impact of Preschool for All on a recent episode of Think Out Loud:

“Parents and Providers Highlight Successes of Preschool for All.”

Listen on the web at <https://bit.ly/PFAonOPB>



## An Accountable Process

### The Preschool for All Advisory Committee

The PFA Ballot Measure and Ordinance called for an advisory group for the initiative, and the Preschool for All Advisory Committee was established in 2021. The committee provides high-level guidance and feedback on initiative implementation. The group's primary focus areas are alignment with the values and intent of the community-developed [Preschool for All Plan](#) and PFA's explicit commitment to building an early learning system focused on racial justice and equity. The committee meets quarterly to advise evaluation efforts, offer guidance on budget planning, review data, and make policy recommendations to the Department of County Human Services.

Members of the PFA Advisory Committee hold key roles in early childhood development and education, and include current and former preschool providers, members of culturally specific organizations, pediatric healthcare providers, school district representatives, and leaders of advocacy organizations. Over 70% percent of the Advisory Committee's members are parents, and over 70% identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.

### Performance Audit

The County Auditor's office is currently conducting a performance audit on Preschool for All's early implementation. Their report will be available later in 2024.

### External Evaluation

Preschool for All is in the second year of an external evaluation partnership with [Boston University's Center on the Ecology of Early Development \(CEED\)](#), funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. As part of this project, we are utilizing the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) developed by Dr. Stephanie Curenton. ACSES uses a culturally relevant, anti-bias framework designed to improve teacher-child interactions.

This research partnership also includes a technical Advisory Committee made up of experts from across the country in child development, early learning, and other related disciplines. Through focus groups, surveys, and observations conducted in the first year of data collection, the CEED team found that so far, PFA has centered families in the planning process for Preschool for All, provided access to free preschool for families from priority populations with the least access previously, and that families themselves reported high satisfaction with PFA.<sup>13</sup>

### Stay Up to Date

To stay in the know throughout Preschool for All's implementation, you can [sign up for our newsletter](#) and visit us on the web at [multco.us/preschool](https://multco.us/preschool). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

### Preschool for All Fast Facts

Want a shorter resource that answers questions about PFA implementation? [Download PFA Fast Facts here](#).

---

<sup>13</sup> Curenton, S. M., Moran, S., Babrow, D., Cook, K.D., & Nazaire, O., Multnomah County Preschool for All Equity Report, 2023.