

Why is Philadelphia proposing Universal Pre-K and not targeting programs (and spending) towards children who need it most?

There are various reasons for making a city program Universal. Some include:

- UPK avoids [segregating](#) at-risk children in low-income-only programs.
- “Universal [programs](#) are likely to be more effective at identifying and reaching all targeted children.”
- High quality early childhood programs provide social and cognitive [benefits](#) to children from all kinds of [backgrounds](#), although initial [benefits](#) appear to be higher for the children most at risk.
- Programs serving children from diverse economic backgrounds enhance social and cognitive [outcomes](#) for all children, *especially* those who are most at risk.
- Providing a universal program broadens the [base](#) of political and public support across all income levels.
- “Going beyond targeted pre-k to universal pre-k pays off modestly in producing net [economic] [benefits](#).”
- “Making pre-K universal like K-12 education also leads parents to think of pre-K (regardless of setting) as [education](#), raising expectations for their children’s learning experiences in pre-K.”
- “Universal preschool can drive changes in kindergarten and elementary [practice](#) . . . accelerating children’s elementary learning”
- UPK is both an educational concept and an investment program for the city.
 - Providing education to all children benefits [children](#) and families of all incomes, and the communities they live in.
 - Investing in early childhood education provides long-term economic [benefits](#) to communities in terms of reduced need for special education, reduced retention in grade, and higher high school graduation rates for low-income *and* middle-class children. It may lead to higher [salaries](#) later in life for students, and more tax payments to communities as a result.
- Even families at or near the cutoff level for subsidized care sometimes cannot afford the [cost](#) of quality care.
- Families move in and out of [eligibility](#), but it is detrimental to children to be moved in and out of programs based on changing eligibility.
- Varying eligibility guidelines also add unnecessary administrative [challenges](#) for families and programs.