Insights from UPK Initiatives
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR SUCCESS

The well-being of today's children affects the future vitality of our communities. Young children who enjoy positive early experiences can better develop the skills that prepare them for school. In addition, children who arrive at kindergarten prepared to learn perform better throughout school and complete more years of education.[1] A more educated workforce, in turn, means higher incomes, more public revenues, and less poverty and crime –thriving communities attract business and jobs. In short, investing in high quality, publicly funded universal pre-kindergarten is essential to building a prosperous future.

1. The Urban Child Institute. (n.d.). Pre-k Matters. Urban Child Institute. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/resources/policy-briefs/pre-k-matters

The Build Back Better framework presents an opportunity to significantly expand our current efforts to build high quality Universal Pre-K (UPK) and raise the pay of those who work in these programs. However, to successfully manage these expansion efforts, cities and towns will need guidance on where to start, plan and build the infrastructure for a universal model, and monitor and develop staff and program capacity to achieve the goals of Universal Pre-K.

This Brief combines Early Childhood Associates' (ECA) experiences with that of our colleagues in Maine, Massachusetts, and New York to share lessons learned and considerations in designing and evaluating Universal Pre-K models.

HIGH QUALITY UNIVERSAL PRE-K MODELS FEATURE	
1	a diverse planning committee that architects the plan
2	clear governance structure to operate the UPK program
3	programs that meet the needs of individual families in terms of (A) Care features: location, hours of care per day, and weeks of care per year, (B) Comprehensive services, and (C) Family engagement
4	equitable access to affordable services across ethnicity, race, income level, developmental ability, and neighborhood residency
5	a well-developed operational infrastructure
6	a diverse, competent, well-compensated, and professionally support-ed workforce across the various roles of early childhood professionals
7	high quality service delivery options
8	systems for ongoing accountability, including learning from feedback, evaluation, and continuous improvement
9	financing that is adequate, equitable, efficient, easy to navigate, easy to administer, transparent, and sustainable.

The following sections articulate key considerations and actions necessary to design a UPK system.

1

Diverse Planning Committee

The strength of a community's UPK plan relies on a core planning committee that is diverse and whose members represent several community spheres: education, social services, culture brokers, and municipal leadership. Core to the team should be representatives from across the education continuum of birth to age 8. Examine your landscape and invite educational leaders from community-based early learning programs, Head Start, and public schools. Educators need to be at the table. Ultimately, they will be the implementers. They must help build the plan, not be handed a plan. Community-based organizations providing services and support to families, such as community action councils, can be valuable contributors to understanding and meeting family needs. Culture broker organizations can provide valuable insights into culturally relevant concerns, needs and norms for populations within the community. Municipal leadership helps build broader support and identify potential synergies in function, form, and funding. Consider the engagement of the Division of Public Health, a city manager or mayor, and even the school committee or city council members who may have a vested interest in meeting the needs of young families.

The Planning Committee will provide grounding to the plan and will shoulder creating the blueprint. Members need to be able to commit to regular engagement. Identify members who will help build buy-in across the community, decision makers and/or those who help inform their decisions, and those who can bring data sources to support the work. If you can look at the group assembled and see creative, problem-solvers who are resilient, connected and committed, you have a great team to work with.

A UPK plan represents the values and diversity of stakeholders who participate in the planning process illustrating the incredible ability of those who live and work in the community to collaborate effectively, efficiently, and enthusiastically.

—Linda Warren,
President of
Early Childhood Associates.

» Planning Committee will shoulder the work of architecting the plan.
» Members should represent diverse perspectives and roles in the community to contribute to the plan's development and support.
» Ensure members are decision-makers or are closely affiliated with decision-makers.

» Consider existing committees and structures with an array of education, community, and leadership voices. Can this be expanded, or a subgroup be formed?
» Who is missing from your table?
» How will family voice be present at the table?

ASSEMBLED THE TEAM — STARTING STRONG.

An important lesson shared by Sue Reed, former Early Childhood Consultant, Maine Department of Education, is to involve all stakeholders from the start. Have those representing childcare, Head Start, family childcare, nursery schools, CDS (Part B 619) and the public schools all at the table.

> **Although it takes time build trust, it is well worth the effort. Our most successful partnerships involved forming district-wide committees that included the district's school superintendent, curriculum director, principal, kindergarten teacher, and special education director and key decision makers and specialist from community-based programs.**
>
> *—Sue Reed, former Early Childhood Consultant*
> *Maine Department of Education*

Building on their experiences UPK leaders offered additional practical considerations.

BUILD TRUST. It seems obvious, but the effectiveness of the team and its ability to have important and sometimes difficult conversations necessitates trust. Value each participant's perspective and stores of knowledge that they bring to the table. Respect is central to establishing the partnership.

ESTABLISH NORMS. There should be a clear understanding of how participants will interact. Determine a process to consider and resolve disagreements. Establish ground rules. As the group begins its work, recommit to these norms at each meeting.

MECHANICS MATTER. Meetings should have an agenda and purpose. Keep minutes of meetings, share them, and build frequent opportunities to reflect on the process of working collaboratively to move the needle of quality universal care and education.

2

Clear Governance Structure

Thriving UPK communities have a clear governance structure that supports successful implementation and ongoing management of the plan. How will decisions be made? Where will the locus of administration be? Who will be responsible for accountability? A typical structure includes entities from the Planning Committee. Usually, it sits either within the school department/district, city government structures, or with a community-based organization with the capacity, expertise, and community presence.

The governance structure is about who makes decisions and should articulate how decisions are made. For example, decisions about the form, structure and programming will be considered in the near term. Later, decisions about start-up and year-to-year budgets, rollout, pilot adaptations, and monitoring will be needed. How will decisions be informed? Who will have voting authority versus advisory capacity? What is the relationship to the school district? What is the relationship to the community-based partners and providers?

Also, consider how the UPK program will function with fiscal operations, contracting, enrollment, evaluation, and accountability. Viable structures can seat the program administration inside of an entity with the skill, capacity, and systems needed while maintaining a diverse advisory or board of directors who makes oversight decisions for the initiative. Other governance models seat oversight and administration with one entity.

Your local landscape, UPK goals, and funding coordination will help you determine the governance structure that fits the initiative in both the short and long term.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

» Governance should consider decision-making authority and program administration structures.
» Quality and impact monitoring contribute to accountability.
» Sustainability and expansion are central tasks that the governance structure should address.

KEY ACTIONS

» Identify central decision-making body.
» Identify organization to serve program administration function.
» Consider funding streams and management.
» Ensure enrollment and participation of families and providers is streamlined.

EXAMPLES OF UPK GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES [2]			
COMMUNITY	OVERSIGHT/ DECISIONS	ADMINISTRATION	DESCRIPTION
Boston	Boston Public Schools	Boston Public Schools	BPS contracts with CBOs; BPS Department of Early Learning provides significant implementation support in professional development, curriculum, materials, coaching, quality improvement, and evaluation.
Preschool Promise Dayton, OH	Board of Directors	Independent 501(c)3	Administered by an independent, non-governmental, fiscally separate, stand-along 501(c)3 organization and includes representation from families, preschools, childcare experts, and funders. A six-member board of directors including elected officials, business, education leaders, health/safety, and military leaders provides oversight.
Denver's Preschool Programs Denver, CO	Board of Directors	Partner with City and County and 501(c)3	The Denver Preschool Program, Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization created to operate the Denver Preschool Program under a contract with the City and County of Denver. The DPP Board of Directors provides oversight.
District of Columbia	DC State Education Body	DC State Education Body	District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Office of Early Learning coordinates early childhood education services for children and families living in DC. Teams supporting the Office of Early Learning include early intervention; licensing & compliance; operations and grants management; policy, planning & research; quality initiatives; communication. The Office of Early Learning reports directly to the State Superintendent.
Lowell, MA	Executive Board & Implementation Team	Lowell Public Schools (LPS)	The Executive Board meets quarterly and comprises the Lowell Public Schools (LPS) Superintendent, Early Childhood Director and Special Education Director, and Executive Directors from two leading communitybased centers, and the Special Education Director. The Implementation Team comprises program directors, social workers, speech and language specialists, mental health representatives and is led by the LPS Assistant Early Childhood Director; meets bi-weekly to discuss decisions and issues of curriculum, PD, assessment, and day-to-day operations.
Maine	Department of Education	Local Public School Units	Maine DOE contracts with local school administration units to increase the number of children accessing high quality Pre-K. Priority is given to schools that partner with community programs such as Head Start or childcare. Cover facility renovations, staff recruitment and training, and other start-up costs.
Pre-K for All NYC, NY	Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education	NYC DOE Division of Early Childhood Education	Funding for Pre-K for 4-year-old children comes from the State DOE through an allocation in the state budget. Additional funding comes from the City of New York at the discretion of the Mayor and City Council. Universal approach provides every 4-year-old whose parents choose full-day (6+ hr.). A community-based advisory council meets periodically.
SMILE Program Somerville, MA	Somerville Partnerships for Young Children (SPYC)	Somerville Department of Early Education/ Somerville Public Schools	The Somerville Partnership for Young Children (SPYC) facilitates collaboration across Somerville to expand access to high quality preschool and wraparound services for 3- and 4-year-olds and connects Somerville Public Schools, Head Start, and participating childcare programs in Somerville iin one, coordinated mixed-delivery system. SPYC works closely with preschool directors and teachers to align curriculum and instruction across Somerville, conduct outreach to families about early education opportunities, and expand the access children have to critical early learning and wraparound services.

2 Current as of March 2022. As UPK initiatives evolve, so can their governance structures.

3

Meet the Needs of Individual Families

There is a role for public policy to expand Pre-K access and meet the logistical needs of working parents/guardians by providing enough hours and months of service.   Extended-day and year-round options are essential for working families. In ECA's study of cities with Universal Pre-K, program dosage predominantly consists of school-day, school-year programs, with options for a shorter or longer day. Full day (e.g., eight to ten-hour day) and/or calendar-year (e.g., 12-month) programs are less common yet desired by families.

Planning teams must first understand what families need. If you build it, will they come? Communities should identify mechanisms to ask families critical questions about what they need, what they want and what barriers they are experiencing.

Former Early Childhood consultant at the Maine Dept of Education, Sue Reed, suggests sending community-wide surveys to determine what parents want and need. This helps communities avoid pitfalls of assumptions or constructing one-size-fits-all models. Asking families about their experiences and challenges to finding care is essential. Yet UPK Planning Teams must also understand the needs of harder-to-reach families, those not yet enrolled in early care and educa-tion programs. Lean into organizations and programs that connect with families, such as libraries, family resource centers, cultural organizations, neighborhood groups, and faith-based institutions.

Use the data to plan the program that will meet families' needs, rather than create a preconceived notion of needs.

—Sue Reed, former Early Childhood Consultant, Maine Department of Education

The diagram shows three interlocking segments:

1. Exisiting Data Sources
» Birth records & census data
» Kindergarten enrollment trends
» Supportive slot utilization
» Licensed ECE providers
» Community Asset Landscape

2. Preferences, Attitudes & Barriers
» Community Surveys
» Focus Groups
» Interviews
» Family-Serving Organizations

3. Universe & Family Needs
» How many children do we need to serve over the next 3-5 years?
» What do families want in preschool programs?

> **Working families have the biggest challenge with half-day programming. The current [half day] funding from the state is no longer feasible for working families, especially in low-come communities. Do we really want families choosing between housing and access to early education?**
>
> *Lisa Van Theil, Early Childhood Coordinator, Lowell PS*

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

A well-executed survey can provide you with a wealth of information about your family needs and community supports. Conducting surveys can range from simple to complex. The level of complexity depends on the number of questions you want to ask and the sample size you want to achieve. Surveys can be used to find out attitudes and reactions, measure client satisfaction, gauge opinions about various issues, and add credibility to your work. Surveys are a primary source of information -- that is, you directly ask someone for a response to a question, rather than using any secondary sources like written records.

There are advantages in doing surveys, but you should consider whether a survey will be the best way of obtaining the information you need. Even though surveys are a valuable method of gathering information, they are not the only way. You will need to decide whether a survey will produce the information you need. The information you need may be obtained through other means, such as informal unstructured conversation that takes place during another activity; census figures; meeting with people in the community; interviews; or observation. The decision to use a survey or not is partly based on the demographic features of your community. For example, interviews or focus groups may be a better option for a community with notably high diversity ratios.

FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

Focus groups, interviews and facilitated parent panels can provide additional context on parent preferences, attitudes, and barriers. These opportunities allow planners to hear directly from families and provide opportunities to understand cultural considerations, obstacles and challenges families face in accessing the

educational experiences and care they need while seeing the assets families bring in making decisions for their children. Work with family-serving organizations like family centers, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement programs, and family liaisons. Community action councils, and culture broker organizations can also be partners in this work. For example, in Worcester, MA, a highly diverse community of 250,000 residents, using focus groups and panels helped leaders understand cultural nuances and experiences of families. The Together for Kids Coalition hosted a parent panel for community organization directors and leaders to listen to families share their stories and struggles which created new insights for programming needs and streamlined support for young children.

Consider the data that is collected to identify (1) features of care, (2) comprehensive services, and (3) family engagement strategies and supports.

Features of Care
- » **LOCATION** – near home or work
- » **HOURS** – hours per day and days per week
- » **DURATION** – school year, full year or other
- » **SETTING** – home -based, center, size, educational model/philosophy

Comprehensive Services
- » These support child and family needs and consider educational, physical and behavioral health, and stability needs. Examples include health and wellness services, early intervention, itinerant service delivery, housing and food stability, employment, and linguistic supports.

Family Engagement
- » How can programs be culturally responsive?
- » How do families enter programs?
- » How are learning partnerships built?
- » How do organizations and services collaborate to support families?
- » How are transitions supported?
- » How can programs flexibly meet family needs?

Centering the UPK design on family needs ensures the most vital connection to build what the community needs and serves the best interests of young children. As Sherry Cleary (University Dean, Early Childhood Initiatives at CUNY, Exec. Director, NY Early Childhood Institute) pointed out, parents and children need the same thing-quality care and education. *They need flexible programs with a variety of options for participating. UPK programs, particularly those that are publicly funded, mandate that all children enroll for the defined school day, whether that be 5 1/2 hours or 6 hours and 20 minutes. But families work and may need before and after school care. Further, there are some schools that expect absolute adherence to the established schedule but our highest quality Pre-K programs want to consider families' needs. Consider accommodating a family where one parent works the night shift and treasures the time s/he has with the child in the morning. Or a situation where the grandparent is available to care for the child in the late afternoon but is better able to pick the child up at noon rather than when 'school ends' for the day. High quality programs should convey the message that the child will have a great, stimulating and nurturing experience whenever they are in the classroom.*

KEY CONSIDERATIONS
- » Care features that are data-informed and meet a range of family needs.
- » Comprehensive services that support family needs beyond early learning that leverage community resources.
- » Family engagement that strives to build authentic learning partnerships with families.

KEY ACTIONS
- » Conduct a comprehensive community needs assessment.
- » Craft asset map of community supports and services for families with children pre-natal to 3rd grade.
- » Establish partnerships with family-support organizations that can bring the family voice.

4

Equitable Access

Planning Teams should conduct a landscape assessment to collect data on what programs are currently available, how families access programs and who is being left out. Understanding the gaps is essential to designing a UPK system that ensures all families have access. Equitable access means high quality care is available when and where families need it and affordable.

To expand Pre-K access, consider these questions:
» **How will isolated families be notified, encouraged, and supported to enroll their children?**
» **What barriers do families face that impede enrollment in programs like Pre-K?**
» **How can we facilitate these processes for families experiencing homelessness?**
» **How can families who work second and third shifts access Pre-K?**
» **How might transportation impede access?**
» **How can we facilitate the process for undocumented families so that they feel safe to pursue Pre-K for their children among city programs and community-based organizations?**

An important component of equitable access planning is knowing who isn't participating and why. There could be parental preferences and/or cultural beliefs about education. There could be preschool "deserts," meaning there isn't a program close to home or close to work that fits the family's need. Is there a need for additional center-based programming or family childcare programs? What is the transportation infrastructure in the area? If getting to a program requires two bus rides and a walk, is that realistic for families? Also, consider the local public school. What is their role in the neighborhood? Do families have access to early learning supports and services before kindergarten? Do the programs available meet the needs of populations of families?

Understanding equitable access includes dimensions of cultural, socio-economic, and diverse learner needs. Understanding your community's family landscape provides you with a start. Consider how you can weave together data on demographics, current gaps and issues, and perceptions of programs and the value of early education. The goal is equitable access for all children. Ensure that planning is situated, contextualized, and designed with the population of families and children you seek to serve.

Rooted in equity, St. Paul's 3-K plan calls for creating culturally specific settings in which children and families feel that their backgrounds are understood and valued as necessary. Training and coaching that supports immigrant and refugee childcare providers to move up the high quality accreditation pathway is important economic development and is good for children and families. St. Paul 3-K is a concerted effort to provide equitable access to affordable, high-quality preschool for all three and four-year old children in Saint Paul. This effort follows the examples of several cities across the country that have initiated their own preschool programs (Denver, San Francisco, New York City, Cincinnati, and Dayton Ohio).

Serving diverse learning needs in young children should incorporate dual language learners and children with disabilities. For example, Boston's UPK initiative focused on children with special rights as they constructed their curriculum model. Ensuring each child could access the curriculum was a driving force. In addition, they leveraged current research (UDL, etc.) and a strengths-based ap-

Equitable access is foundational to the development a robust UPK system. An inclusive, responsive, and effective UPK program will ensure equity of opportunity in access to programs, services and supports and policies affecting all young children and their families.

—Linda Warren, President, Early Childhood Associates

proach. Recent Community Preschool Partnership Initiative Planning Grants in Massachusetts included a new and specific focus on special education and inclusion. This priority strand focuses on "the concept that inclusion is first, a belief that everyone belongs, regardless of perceived ability, and that all are valued and contributing members of the school community." Using a needs assessment to anchor planning for special education and dual language services, the RFP asks communities to explore program designs that serve children in environments of family choice, access to and use of community screening, professional development across the early education partners, comprehensive services for children and families (including transportation), and examination of transitions and referral processes. The centering goal is to plan for the needs of children with the least disruption and leverage all learning environments to provide high quality supports and services in partnership with community-based programs, public school districts, and other community-based learning partners like early intervention, Head Start and culture broker organizations.

Finally, in planning UPK initiatives, consider the broader goals of your community's diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) agenda. How can universal Pre-K advance those goals? How can individual programs examine their curriculum, family engagement, operations, and teacher diversity to recognize bias and build more inclusive environments for children? How is the community identifying and eliminating structural racism? In Worcester, the community used municipal data points to understand to what extent Latinx families are underserved. They also aligned their Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) goals to include access to high quality early education. There is a more precise understanding that more families want full day preschool programming than is currently provided. Recent research from the University of Chicago (2022) underscores that need. Researchers found that expanding full-day Pre-K (at least 6 hours) boosted enrollment and attendance for Black children (doubled) and Latinix children (tripled).[3]

3 https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/meeting-families-needs

5

Build the UPK System on Existing Infrastructure

Consider all the assets of the existing early childhood infrastructure in your community. Recently, ECA was awarded a contract from a large urban city in the Northeast to study the feasibility of two options for launching a Universal Pre-K program. One option was to build on the existing mixed delivery system; the other was to create a Universal Pre-K program in the public-schools.

The first step was to prepare population and demographic estimates; analyze potential enrollment, space requirements, costs, and administrative structures; and the feasibility and implications of the both public school and community-based models.

We worked with partners to answer such questions as:

» **What is the estimated enrollment over the next 10 years?**
» **What is the array of programs required to meet family needs for program dosage?**
» **What is the capacity of current community providers to meet additional programming needs?**
» **What is the estimated financial impact if applying standards of exact costs to all programs whether public or private, based on various levels of subsidies, including any required administrative structure?**
» **What space is needed to implement a mixed-delivery model? How can these space needs be met?**
» **What is the potential impact on the population of families with young children moving to the city, including the number of children and demographics?**
» **What is the impact on the availability and cost of programs for children three years of age and younger?**

MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

A system that includes services offered through various programs and providers such as Head Start, licensed family and center-based child-care, public schools, and community-based organization supported with a combination of public and private funding.

Studying the feasibility of Universal Pre-K for three-year-old children was an important phase of our work. As Sherry Cleary reminds us, the science is precise that the first three years are critical for brain development, language acquisition, and social-emotional development. ***Cities that invest in their youngest children stand to realize better gains and return on investment.*** *As a citizen, advocating for these investments is an important civic responsibility.*

ECA conducted qualitative interviews with cohorts of randomly selected early childhood center-based directors in Massachusetts to learn more about their potential participation in a Universal Pre-K system. Interviewees identified at least one participation issue related to capacity; the most frequently named concerns included: a lack of well-trained, experienced teachers; insufficient funding to support higher staff salaries; and space limitations. In addition, some directors identified barriers, such as added paperwork; their desire to maintain flexibility for tuition; and obstacles to professional development requirements, including the scheduling of professional learning opportunities and coverage needed to facilitate staff participation.

Our study findings showed that building UPK solely in schools can destabilize and undermine childcare and the existing community infrastructure. Families typically need high quality early education & care ten hours a day. Instead of a full-scale investment in revamping the public-school structure, Sherry Cleary advises targeting available funds for quality, salaries and increasing professional qualifications in the existing system. Central to this position, Cleary asserts that it is time to ...*dispel the myth that pre-k is better than childcare. We hurt ourselves and our field and families when we differentiate high quality care from pre-k.*

Both the public schools and community programs have an interest in ensuring stability in using their own facility and staff capacity.

Regardless of the Universal Pre-K options selected, leaders of the initiative will need to decide:

» **How will program slots and associated resources be allocated among publicly funded programs and community-based organizations?**

» **How will child and family eligibility be determined and where will enrollment occur?**

» **What resources will be available to community programs for start-up costs such as purchasing curriculum materials, staff training on curriculum, and other required equipment and materials to meet program standards?**

» **What supports and services such as developmental screening, health services, and family support will be incorporated into the Pre-K program across all settings?**

6

Diverse and Professionally Supported Workforce

The key to a high quality UPK initiative is the caliber of its workforce. As such, the qualifications, experience, and compensation of leaders, teachers, and assistant teachers are critical considerations. Therefore, UPK partners need to contribute to workforce development efforts that include the creation of a pipeline of qualified individuals, access to meaningful and effective professional development, and career pathways that encourage promotion and career advancement.

DIVERSE WORKFORCE PIPELINE. Educator diversity should be valued and promoted within UPK initiatives. Staff should reflect the diversity of students that they serve. Research confirms the value to children's growth and learning. Many community-based early education programs bring this strength. Use the planning process to understand strategies and supports those programs use to attract and

retain a diverse professional workforce. Building a pipeline of educators and leaders to support your UPK initiative will support its growth and sustainability.

Investments in professional development of early childhood educators in the workforce continue to be necessary given the level of teacher qualifications permitted in many programs and teachers' low levels of education in some settings. In addition, investing in professional development for those already in the workforce can help sustain diversity. One solution is establishing apprenticeships that combine on-the-job training and classroom instruction and scholarships for coursework leading to credentials and degrees. Such opportunities are significant to maintain the workforce's diversity while supporting quality improvements.

Central to the state of Maine's B-5 Strategic Plan is recruiting, preparing, and retaining a strong and diverse workforce. An essential step in achieving this goal targets the promotion of early childhood as a critical profession and desirable career path. In Maine this work starts with middle and high school students. Information campaigns targeting this age range create interest for pursuing a career in early childhood education. Conversations with middle and high school guidance counselors and specialty programs (OT, Speech, PT) and social work groups can encourage enrollment of students in early childhood and specialty programs.

Cities such as Denver are rewarding early childhood educators who have attained a postsecondary degree with a supplement. Several communities across the country support increases in wages though a direct supplement or a tax credit. Others are exploring shared services (insurance, discounts at stores) for EC program staff.

ROBUST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. UPK initiatives hold classrooms and programs accountable to established standards in programmatic and administrative quality. This includes ensuring that every UPK staff member, whether inside the public schools or across a mixed-delivery system, has access to professional learning opportunities that are tailored to their work responsibilities, development stage as an educator, and their tolerance and readiness for growth. According to Reed, *high quality training followed by in classroom coaching was the only way the universal expansion effort could drive and measure teacher change in practice. Moreover, both were sustainable beyond the public school/Head Start partnership pre-k expansion funding.*

Some cities with mixed-delivery UPK programming have established career development centers that focus solely on career pathways serving children and families from Birth to Grade 3. In New York City, for example, a Professional Development Institute, housed at City University of New York, engages potential educators from as early as high school through college and university and outside of traditional educational trajectories, with the specific aim of increasing the pool of early childhood educators. Career advisors assess students' current credentials and plan a tailored pathway for acquiring the qualifications needed to work in a range of early childhood settings. Paths may include local credit-bearing CDA programs, teacher preparation degree and credentialing programs, and leadership development opportunities. They also created the SUNY/CUNY Early Childhood Work-

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All preschool children aged 3-5 deserve access to a Bachelor-degreed teacher.

—*Lisa Van Theil, Early Childhood Coordinator, Lowell PS*

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force Scholarship to support educators already working with young children 20 hours or more each week, to support pursuit of degrees, credentials, and certifications that lead to career advancement and higher quality. These types of programs often provide job search support, as well, to shorten the time between a program's staffing vacancy and the identification of viable candidates for the position.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SUPPORT. Leadership support is essential. Leaders need to understand what high quality programs look like, how to support teachers in implementing them and their role as instructional coaches. The program or site director steers the program's culture and the philosophy. Program culture and philosophy create a foundation for policies, practices, and decision-making. A UPK initiative needs strong leadership at the site level with expertise in general management, compliance with and accountability to regulations, fiscal responsibilities, facilities, staff, enrollment, programming for children and families, health, safety, nutrition, and community relations. Program leaders are often single operators without significant support mechanisms and staff. Consider networking groups, specialized professional development, and access to higher education. Ensure programs have the staffing structure that enables directors/owners to lead and educators have planning time, on-the-job coaching, and other professional support to build their capacity. They should have opportunities to advance their formal education too. In Worcester, MA two higher education institutions collaborated with the early learning community to support leadership development. They crafted a leadership certificate program contextualized for the early education field. When completed, the credits were completely transferable into a Master of Education program at the state university. NYC's Early Childhood Professional Development Institute created the Leadership Initiative in partnership with the Department of Education to strengthen the existing early childhood leadership of principals and directors but also to build a pipeline of leaders to fill roles as they became available.

COMPENSATION. Recruiting, training and retaining this high quality workforce is central to a robust UPK initiative. Educators across the system will be delivering comparable programs and supports within a diverse range of settings. Compensation parity is the final piece to consider along with curriculum, training, quality standards, and aligned goals. For example, communities in Massachusetts Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, initially funded with federal Preschool Expansion Grant funds, developed mechanisms to ensure educators received comparable compensation to their counterparts in K-12 districts for their education credentials and experience.

SEATTLE'S PUBLIC PRESCHOOL compensation system encourages classroom teachers and preschool directors to make progress toward required position credentials and therefore helps preschool programs to retain well-qualified teachers. Compensation is based on degree attainment, State certification status, and experience. Regardless of setting type, all teachers who meet the education/certification requirements are paid on par with public school teachers.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

» Establish or enhance a diverse educator and leadership pipeline.
» Craft a comprehensive professional development system, integrating strengths of community partners, higher education, and school district.
» Compensation equity leads to quality and a stable infrastructure.

KEY ACTIONS

» Leverage a need assessment to understand current workforce landscape across the community.
» Identify existing strengths and new strategies to recruit a diverse workforce.
» Identify partnering institutions to support professional development and credentialling attainment.
» Build budgets that account for compensation parity.

7

High Quality Service Delivery Options

The goal of Universal Pre-K is to create a cohesive system of high quality early education and care resulting in children's healthy development and kindergarten readiness. Quality early childhood programs provide experiences that optimize each child's development, learning and health. Research is clear; higher quality programs lead to more significant, lasting child outcomes.

The new Universal Pre-K model is not an extension of what already exists but represents a new way of delivering high quality services for four-year-old children. It presents an opportunity for programs to review their existing curriculum, understand its impact, and align it with the standards. At a minimum, there must be some evidence regarding the benefits and impact on children's learning and skill development, alignment with developmentally appropriate practices, and the state's early learning standards. Unfortunately, not all programs that could potentially be converted to UPK sites use an evidence-informed curriculum based on authentic assessment of children.

TEACHER PRACTICE IS AT THE CORE OF HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMMING.
Research consistently demonstrates a direct correlation between quality of educator, their practice, and their interactions with children in classroom. Why? Teachers architect the environment and directly implement curriculum. Lisa Kuh, former Director of Early Childhood, Somerville PS, presents a clear call to action for educators.

Whether you have our children for 5, 6, 7, or even 10 hours a day, you must continue an unrelenting focus on the experiences children have. We must:
» **Design beautiful and interesting environments that reduce trauma.**
» **Offer practices that keep children's interests, play, Big Idea/Themes, and their desire to communicate (speaking, drawing, and writing) at the heart of what is offered.**
» **Make sure that we understand children's developmental trajectories in academic, physical, and social-emotional learning.**

—Lisa Kuh, PhD, former Director of Early Childhood, Somerville PS

CURRICULUM CHOICES MATTER. Some UPK communities adopt a common curriculum; others identify standards, goals, and benchmarks but allow for a wider variety of evidenced-based curriculum models. The curriculum was a key focal point for Lowell MA's UPK initiative. Lisa Van Theil (Early Childhood Coordinator, Lowell Public Schools) described early efforts. When the work started all 42 (now there are 50) of public-school preschool classrooms and the community programs used a different curriculum. Today, all programs including public schools, preschool expansion programs, parent child home programs, and playgroups, use the same curriculum, which is aligned with MA Early Learning Standards. Lowell chose to build its own curriculum, which took investment, buy-in and several years of piloting. Boston Public School developed its nationally researched curriculum, "Focus on Learning" beginning with preschool and has expanded and refined curriculum through 2nd grade. Leaders in both cities continually refine curriculum to ensure it is culturally responsive, differentiates for diverse learners, and stays rooted in current research.

LOOK CAREFULLY AT SPACE AND THE QUALITY OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.
Building a UPK system presents an opportunity for programs to take stock of the space available across the community, understand safety and quality features of their indoor and outdoor environments, and determine what types of improvements are needed, for example, a light repair, an aesthetic improvement, or modest or major renovation to an existing facility. In Lowell, MA, as in many communities, space is an issue. Maximizing current available space only provides for 1/3 of preschoolers to be served. Access to additional space requires careful planning. Communities should allocate funds upfront to conduct a space audit to understand what is available and the feasibility and costs of serving children at these locations. There are numerous environment checklists focused on early

Quality must be clearly defined and non-negotiable. Greater access to mediocre or low-quality care does not result in the desired developmental outcomes for children and, in fact, has been shown to further disadvantage already at-risk children.

—Sherry Cleary, University Dean, Early Childhood Initiatives at CUNY, Exec. Director, NY Early Childhood Institute

childhood environments. Many program playgrounds do not provide the equipment and space to make the outdoor environment an extension of the indoor space; it is not uncommon for playgrounds to offer only one or two pieces of play equipment. According to interviews with school representatives, some schools have access to or house playground equipment suitable for four-year-old children. Renovations may include fencing, self-closing/locking gates, multiple and suitable surfaces, and adequate outdoor storage facilities.

Build continuity across birth to eight. Transitions must be carefully planned and convey the message that we care deeply about the child. A child and family live and grow in a community and transition across systems. Their experience should be intentionally designed and supported with comprehensive services, warm handoffs, and environments that value and reflect their cultural diversity. According to Sherry Cleary, we need to work from the perspective of what makes sense to this tiny person and their family.

CELEBRATE AND WELCOME CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO KINDERGARTEN.

Many UPK communities plan several transitional events to support enrollment and transitioning. For example, Boston hosts a city-wide Countdown to Kindergarten event each spring at the Boston Children's Museum. Other communities host events at local libraries and include activities like "Board a Bus" or "Meet the School Nurse" with fun and engaging activities for children and their families. In addition, some UPK communities host classroom visits for rising kindergarteners in the spring. For example, PreK teachers take their classes on a field trip to visit a kindergarten room. Another strategy is to invite kindergarten teachers to be guest readers in UPK classrooms. The goal is to create warm hand offs for children and families.

Encourage connections and engagement across educators in the UPK system. How can educators build a shared understanding of each other's educational environments, share ideas for classroom design, and see the value in the goals and curriculum at each level? Cross-classroom visits at the UPK and between PreK and kindergarten provide rich contexts for sharing knowledge building.

BUILD TRUST THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Sue Reed recommends the following:

» Establish protocols for transition to kindergarten.

» Be sensitive to kindergarten teachers' feelings about a new PreK program. We found more than one district where kindergarten-teachers, who were used to being the child's first teacher, were a bit resentful of the PreK teachers.

» Spend time in each other's spaces. One of the most successful districts held an in-service day where the PreK and kindergarten teachers spent time in the others' classroom. They had a form to guide [their observations]/them. Then they came back and debriefed, [highlighting strengths, a-has, new learning, and more].

NY UPK Initiative

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Accountability Systems

Most cities with universal pre-K programs have a coordinated system to monitor program implementation, and they use that information to improve Pre-K practices. Designing and enacting a system of continuous quality improvement is critical for effective programs and ensuring that funding is well spent. In cities where local funds have been allocated for Pre-K, many leaders feel obligated to ensure the program is being implemented as intended. They base decisions for improving the program on rigorous process and outcome data collection and analysis. A few cities stand out for their attention to establishing both a continuous improvement system and funding program evaluation to ensure that funds are being invested well. All have implemented systems of quality improvement and have funding for program evaluation efforts.

COMMON CHILD ASSESSMENT TOOL. While Sherry Cleary acknowledges that people who launch Pre-K must demonstrate with data the effect of the program, data size can't be everything.

In Maine for example, a standard assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG), was adopted for the PreK and kindergarten programs. Since Head Start was already using the tool, there was a long development record for children in Head Start who had entered when infants or toddlers. Getting kindergarten teachers on board with TSG was a challenge, but it was well worth it. TSG helped kindergarten teachers assess all developmental domains and ensured continuity of strengths-based assessment. In addition, the tool supports educator understanding of where individual children are across all developmental domains, supports small group planning, and offers specific strategies to individualized growth and learning supports. In some districts, the public-school funds were allocated to pay for the TSG per child cost.

SHARED QUALITY MONITORING TOOLS. Measuring the quality of the environment and staff-child interactions should be central considerations to developing quality learning environments. Work here is nuanced. Growing quality requires examining the physical environment with tools like ECRS or ELLCO. These tools enable programs to see strengths and set goals for growth, so in that sense it is individualized to programs. Programs can come together to share and examine results, learning from each other. The other key element to quality is interactions between adults and children. Some quality measurement tools incorporate this within the dimensions of quality. Other tools, like CLASS focus on adult-child interactions with depth. Both types of tools yield valuable data, enabling practitioners to reflect, set goals and identify supports, like professional development, to enhance quality.

In Maine, the UPK initiative evaluated the program with a suite of assessment tools, including the CLASS, ELLCO, and gathered child outcome data using three national measures. This data was particularly helpful in understanding children's assets and challenges, in building a strong marketing platform and to guide professional development.

In **Somerville MA**, evaluation targets short- and long-term classroom quality and child outcomes. The ELLCO and CLASS are used as measures of program quality. Report card data, and kindergarten entry assessments (KESI) are used to measure impact on children. A program survey is used to supplement both CLASS and child outcome measures.   ECA has been collecting this data since 2016 and can present a compelling snapshot of ways universal pre-k efforts benefit children, programs, and the early learning system.

In the **Dayton Preschool Promise** program, success is measured by the increase in the number of children who attend a high-quality preschool and benchmarks around children improving their readiness for kindergarten and their success in 3rd grade. Data shows that Dayton students in Preschool Promise programs are making significant academic and social gains and are outpacing expected gains on nationally normed assessments. Preschool Promise has focused the past years on racial achievement gaps, as black children continue to start school academically behind and struggle to make up ground as years go on. Based on data from the Bracken assessment tool and the Minnesota Executive Function Scale, Preschool Promise 4-year-olds improved their scores on both tests.

In **Saint Paul 3K** robust evaluation is key to the financial stewardship of the public funds. Taxpayers deserve to know how money is being spent and how it makes a difference. Existing data sources are leveraged through data sharing agreements to reduce the burden on children, families, and programs. The evaluation plan ultimately connects 3K efforts to child outcomes. While early evaluation results are intended to show how well Saint Paul 3K is doing to prepare children for kindergarten, long-term evaluation looks at longitudinal effects including third-grade reading and high school graduation. The evaluation plan is broad and includes an analysis of the benefits to children, families, programs, and the community. The method consists of an implementation evaluation and quantitative and qualitative research. Given the diversity of Saint Paul's children, cultural and language fluency and outcomes are tracked and evaluated.

Identifying a standard set of tools that UPK partners will use supports continuous improvement, collaboration, and shared accountability. It also provides a road map for programs to understand and grow the quality and impact of their programs. Together they help build a quality system accountable to a shared vision.

ACCOUNTABILITY DATA ARCHITECTURE. During planning, begin building your UPK data system and understand where the data will come from, who will warehouse data elements, and how and when it will be analyzed. Timing and layering in accountability are important. Tracking enrollment and usage data and satisfaction are early steps. Examining quality can ramp up and grow with the initiative. Child outcome data should be layered in after 1-2 years of implementation as programs and educators implement new curriculum, professional development strategies, and measurement tools. The architecture should also include decisions on a centralized data repository and ensure programs have access to their data and incorporate disaggregating data.

DATA & MEASUREMENT TOOL CONSIDERATIONS		
IMPLEMENTATION DATA	QUALITY DATA	CHILD OUTCOMES DATA
Enrollment - # children served	ECRS - environmental	Formative Assessment
(TSG, Work Sampling)	Board of Directors	Independent 501(c)3
Demographic information	ELLCO – environmental	Discrete Skills (PVVT)
Financial	CLASS – relationship & instructional practice	IEP correlations
Family Survey & Focus Groups		
Staff Survey & Focus Groups		

9

Financing that is Adequate, Equitable, Easy to Administer and Sustainable

Leaders remind us to consider both the short and long-term views of investing in early childhood. For example, economists estimate a 7-16% return on investment (ROI) in early education for children from low-income households – an ROI that outpaces the average 6% annual return from the stock market since WWII.[4]

Some slack must be built into the system to guarantee universal availability. Because the number of Pre-K classrooms is fixed over short- to medium-term, CBOs

4 www.heckmanequation.org

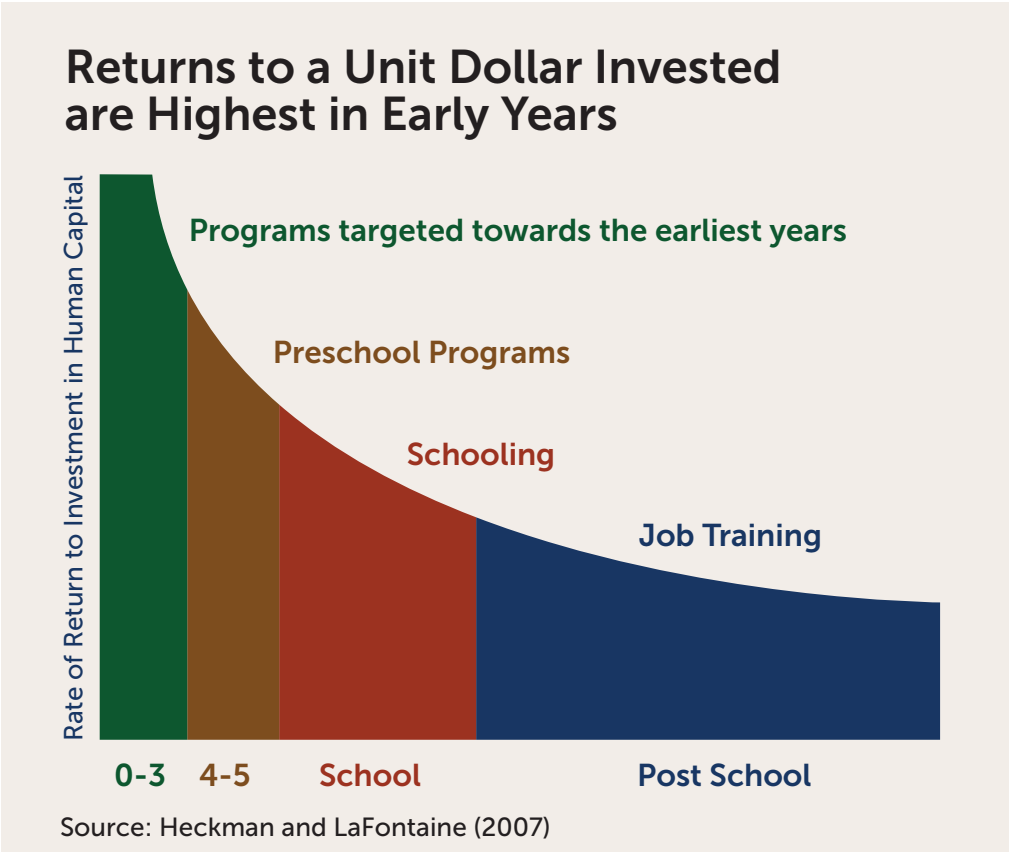and other participating providers will have to provide the incremental spaces needed to address year-to-year fluctuations in student numbers. Over the forecasted period, the population of four-year-old children is expected to grow, which means the system will have to add new slots in most years. These slots must be net of any closures or downsizing that occurs in center-based programs. It may be helpful to conduct a study of churn among participating providers to ensure that there is enough extra space across the UPK system to absorb to loss of programs over time.

TRUE COST MODELING VS. MARKET RATE

Understanding the cost drivers in the mixed delivery system is essential. Most of the cost in early learning programs relates to staffing. There are also costs for facilities, overhead, and supplies. Costs may include program administration, quality improvement supports including professional development, evaluation/accountability; enrollment supports and outreach to families, including marketing; wage subsidies for providers, robust parent engagement, and budget reserves to cover the potential fluctuations in revenue earned. Looking at several cities' prekindergarten programs, it is reasonable to estimate these costs as being at least 15-20% of the direct tuition/access costs. Also, it is appropriate to estimate that even in a universally available pre-k program, only 80 – 85% of families will participate. Current cost modeling approaches for UPK consider the true cost of

> "The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five."
>
> —*James Heckman, Nobel Laureate Economist*

Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested are Highest in Early Years

Rate of Return to Investment in Human Capital

Programs targeted towards the earliest years

Preschool Programs

Schooling

Job Training

0-3   4-5   School   Post School

Source: Heckman and LaFontaine (2007)

quality versus pinning quality to the rate that the market can bare. Adequate and equitable compensation and high quality facilities and learning environments are the two biggest drivers to a community's early learning system. UPK communities invest in space, materials, equipment, and transportation, staffing, and comprehensive supports. Build the budget needed to invest in the quality you need. Relying on market-rate surveys may artificially underrepresent the costs for personnel and facilities.

IDENTIFYING & BRAIDING FUNDING STREAMS

To start, find opportunities to braid and blend sources. Leverage grants, federal, state, and local funding mechanisms. Pilot funding can often begin with state grants, supplemented by local philanthropy. Can contributions from multiple state entities be braided to support facility upgrades, professional development, nutritional programming, comprehensive family supports, and staffing needs?

   Match funding needs to the stage of development. Startup funding is often available through community foundations to help with "proof of concept". Stackable planning grants can help communities start and build out their UPK systems. The Department of Early Education & Care in MA leveraged a series of planning grants to establish community alignment which paved the way to Preschool Expansion Planning Grants and subsequent implementation grants to ready communities. Consider discrete funding for projects or components of your UPK system. Data system development, evaluation programs, and playscapes/playgrounds can often be funded as projects or through a combination of community-based funding and municipal planning. For example, Worcester, MA has a municipal commitment to increase and maintain green and blue spaces, incorporating child-friendly elements so that local programs can access and use the space. Local neighborhood playgrounds have been refurbished and made safe and engaging and provide play settings for family childcare providers and smaller local centers. The new public library's playground is shared with the YWCA with a balance of closed playtimes and open-to-public times. Building collaborations beyond the education and care ecosystem can create new opportunities to align resources.

EASY TO NAVIGATE AND ADMINISTER

The UPK system needs to be clear and simple for families to navigate. Consider a first-child family. What does the family need to know and do? How will diverse families be welcomed? How can we simplify and streamline the enrollment process and honor family choice? Lawrence MA decided on a centralized enrollment process for all UPK students regardless of the setting. Families went to the Lawrence Public Schools and could be enrolled in any program with a UPK slot. Then they were assigned a SSAID number (student identification number) and enrolled at the specific program partner. Parents could choose the program features that met their need, from location to hours to length of year. A foundational goal in the Seattle Public Preschool program is to have an applicant pool that represents the racial and economic demographics of families with preschool age

» Funding plans and budgets should contain drivers for expansion and quality benchmarks.

» Model to true cost of quality not just market rate assumptions.

» Administrative systems and processes should be streamlined and easy to navigate so that providers can focus on quality programming in their classrooms.

» Sustainability may mean utilizing a variety of sources so that the system can sustain the ebbs and flows of funding sources.

KEY ACTIONS

» Identify costs. Craft realistic budgets that account for the cost of quality not simply access.

» Determine funding streams that can be applied. Consider braided models.

» Design systems that are integrated and easy to navigate for families and partner providers.

» Collect and share stories of impact & success.

children living within any given catchment area. Different community locations in various catchment areas serve as enrollment hubs such as libraries, Seattle Public Schools, and community centers. A Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) human services coordinator provides enrollment application assistance and trains enrollment staff throughout the city to support families in completing the application process.

Similarly, administration for programs needs to be kept efficient. From budgeting to planning professional development to payments and reporting, consider streamlining processes and eliminating unnecessary duplication. Heavy administrative burdens without resources will create "opt out" issues and limit program participation. This becomes limiting for children and families and can inadvertently chip away at equity goals.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING. SHOWCASE RESULTS.

Share success with the community and stakeholders. Feature real stories of impact for families and educators. Showcase the program to local officials, legislators, state government officials, and funders. Share data. Share learning. Share joy. Over time, share child outcome results.

Know your numbers. What will it take to reach universal high quality access for all preschoolers? Have a clear grasp of your target and the costs. What is the cost to add classrooms or to add seats? What are the costs for comprehensive family supports? What are the costs for integrated special education supports? What are ongoing maintenance costs for UPK? Stay abreast of fluctuations in birth rates, transiency, business development, and other factors influencing the preschool population.

Build stories of success, ask for funds, and look for opportunities to carve out new funds as the value proposition for high quality universal pre-K is realized.

INCREMENTAL ROLL-OUT

Getting ready for a UPK program can take up to a year to do it right. Once partners are on board, it can take a year of planning to prepare to launch your UPK initiative. Communities will move through four phases over the next 3-4 years. Each build on the previous phase. Since planning will be responsive, elements might be iterative. Thriving UPK communities continue to learn and refine their plans, approaches, and strategies to best meet the needs of children and families. It is a living, breathing initiative. Be sure to chart success points along the way.

ECA proposes a four-step implementation plan.

PHASE 1: DESIGN

» Select options for the UPK systems and practices.
» Identify all financing resources.
» Create detailed timeline for implementation.
» Hire staff to oversee the work: convene search committee, write job descriptions, design interview protocols, post positions, screen applicants, conduct interviews and reference checks, hire, and orient.
» Launch the Pre-K Quality Improvement initiative with as many sites as possible to build their quality for future engagement in UPK.
» Create an implementation plan:
» Identify high quality sites. Conduct information sessions and interviews to gauge interest among CBO sites throughout the city;
» Consider procurement processes for one-time, startup purchases: Will sites make purchases and be reimbursed, or will start-up equipment be purchased centrally, after consultation with sites, to take advantage of city-specific discounts?
» Design the RFP, identifying criteria to be evaluated, including a site visit for each applicant, scoring rubrics, and review processes.
» Design the contract language and format to be used in the contract process.
» Design the contract review, award, and monitoring processes.
» Begin database design by determining what elements will be collected, studied, and reported.
» Design branding for UPK's recruitment materials and orientation materials.

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENT

» Launch RFP's and make site selections.
» Conduct orientation sessions for selected sites and review their implementation plans.
» Design family support protocols.
» Begin recruitment of families.
» Enroll families.
» Support sites in their readiness to open – visit, inspect, THANK!

PHASE 3: CELEBRATE UNIVERSAL PRE-K

» Conduct a Summer Institute for all new Pre-K leaders and classroom staff to introduce Network staff and functions; include keynote address and professional development in a range of topics that serve to unify staff from different programs across the city under one UPK umbrella.
» Monitor program quality improvement.
» Implement all facets of UPK.
» Set up evaluation protocols and begin to collect data.

PHASE 4: GROW

Set targets for growth to serve all 4-year-olds. Conduct evaluations. Open new classrooms. Plan budgets that account for startup and maintenance costs.

TARGETS FOR GROWTH	PLANNING COSTS	STARTUP COSTS	MAINTENANCE COSTS
Year 1	✔	✔	
Year 2		✔	✔
Year 3			✔

Understand if and how family childcare providers intersect with your UPK initiative.

Most often, local UPK initiatives begin with a focus on the school district and center-based programming in the community. It can be more streamlined and Pre-K classrooms and seats in classrooms can quickly be added. Family childcare programs (both independent and systems-based providers) offer an important option for families and should have a place in the community's UPK system. Family childcare is often highly culturally responsive with diverse educators and a setting of choice for families with younger children, particularly in neighborhoods and cultural communities. FCC efforts are underway in many UPK communities. ECA will be tracking those efforts closely in the coming years.

UPK READINESS SCREENER

Use this screener to help you identify existing strengths and readiness. For each item, answer y/n. For each Yes, score 1 point. Total the points and then use the What's Next chart to identify where your community is in its UPK journey.

	ITEM		CIRCLE	POINTS
1.	Planning committee	Do you have a cross-sector community planning team in place to guide the development of the UPK model?	Y N	
2.	Governance structure	Have you determined where administration of UPK will be situated and how decisions will be made?	Y N	
3.	Needs assessment	Do you have a comprehensive community needs assessment for children birth-five? Is it current (within 2 years) and up-to-date given changing community conditions and demographics?	Y N	
4.	Families	Do you understand needs, preferences, and barriers for all families in your community?	Y N	
5.	Operational considerations	Have you conducted a landscape audit to identify the existing early education & care infrastructure in your community?	Y N	
6.	Workforce	Do you understand the current EC workforce capacity and education levels across the community?	Y N	
7.	High quality service options	Have you conducted a space and facilities audit across the community? OR	Y N	
		Is there alignment of either curriculum or learning standards across programs?		
8.	Accountability & Continuous Improvement (CQI)	Do current programs use program quality assessment tools?	Y N	
9.	Financing	Have you determined cost and initial funding sources?	Y N	
10.	Administration	Do you have an operational plan for administering UPK model including contracting, financing, quality improvement, and outcomes?	Y N	
	Total Readiness Points			

CHARTING YOUR UPK COURSE

NEXT STEPS: Based on the UPK Readiness Screener results, you are likely to need the following:

	STAGE		WHAT'S NEXT?
0-5	**Formative**	It's early and you are ready to go deeper into community planning.	❏ Develop partnerships for planning ❏ Assemble UPK Planning Committee ❏ Conduct a needs assessment ❏ Conduct infrastructure assessment ❏ Expand partnerships ❏ Establish governance structure ❏ Articulate UPK vision
5-7	**Design & Plan**	Roll up your sleeves, examine the data and draft the UPK blueprint.	❏ Develop UPK expansion plan ❏ Develop budgets and cost modeling structures ❏ Resource identification ❏ Develop plan for workforce pipeline & professional learning ❏ Identify UPK curriculum plan ❏ Identify suite of program quality tools
7-10	**Implementation & Refinement**	You are ready to put plans into action and roll-out UPK. Pilot to learn and refine implementation.	❏ Physical environment upgrades and buildout ❏ Roll-out planning ❏ Data collection & analysis ❏ Implementation evaluation
10	**Scale**	Early success is building excitement. Now it is time to grow UPK and ensure it is an integral part of your community's early learning ecosystem.	❏ Impact evaluation ❏ Sustainability ❏ Showcase outcomes, partnerships, and impact

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATES

Based just outside of Boston, in the hub of research and innovation, Early Childhood Associates, Inc. (ECA) is a nationally recognized consulting firm dedicated to promoting the healthy growth and development of children, adolescents, and their families as well as the practitioners who support them. ECA, Inc. has impacted thousands of children, families and practitioners and administrators at every level of educational service.

ECA, Inc. is at the forefront of innovation and evolution in PreK-12 education, with innovative data driven decision-making facilitations, effective and powerful mentor-coaching, the creation of continual program improvement through meticulous program evaluation, and the important work of infusing community and families into the education of our children and youth.
www.earlychildhoodassociates.com

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linda Warren, President of Early Childhood Associates, has extensive expertise in early education and care systems; core knowledge and core competencies for providers and TA/coaching specialists; evidence-informed practice; professional development; using data for continuous improvement, preschool expansion models, and birth to five system building. She has collaborated with state and local communities to research the feasibility and need for universal pre-k and developed step-by-step guidance in creating programs. She led the evaluation of the state of Maine's universal pre-k program and researched and collaborated with ten cities and towns across the country to identify best practices in launching a comprehensive UPK plan.

Kim Davenport brings more than 25 years of experience in early education and non-profit management. As Managing Director for Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment at Edward Street in Worcester, MA. She leads city-wide alignment efforts for educators, community organizations, and leaders. Her early career includes work in higher education and business. Davenport holds an M.A. in Child Development from Tufts University and a B.A. from Villanova University.

Early Childhood Associates
12 Library St.
Framingham, MA 01701
508-788-3444