



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.

Nearly ten years ago, New Jersey's Legislature and Governor made a commitment to equity and quality for pre-k access, promising to improve educational outcomes for 50,000 more 3- and 4-year-olds throughout our state - and in hundreds of communities. Only 35 school districts have had that promise met: they are the only places in NJ that receive state funding for full-day pre-k for every 3- and 4-year-old in the [school district](#).

While waiting for the 2008 law to be funded, some NJ school districts have acted on the importance of pre-k. Working locally, these individual school districts collaborate with community organizations and others to prioritize access to pre-k education - and the benefits that it provides for some, if not all, of their youngest citizens.

As an example, the Newton Public Schools in Sussex County use a combination of local dollars to support pre-k. These local dollars are made possible by careful management and redefining district priorities, nonprofit partners and other sources to offer pre-k to the community. The Newton Public Schools will expand some of the classroom sizes in the Merriam Avenue School to provide a third pre-k classroom for special needs 3- and 4-year-olds, as well as some district 4-year-olds. They are partnering with the United Way of Northern New Jersey and NORWESCAP to discuss ways to enable additional children to attend pre-k with community-based private or nonprofit providers. While waiting for the promised state funding per the 2008 law for all 3- and 4-year-olds in the community, pre-k access for Newton students is funded through sliding scale tuition along with some school district funds. All 3- and 4-year-old special needs students in Newton already are state-funded for pre-k per NJ's 2008 law.

"IN 2008, THE LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR INCLUDED A PROMISE IN THE STATE SCHOOL AID FORMULA TO EXPAND NJ'S STATE-FUNDED, HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K TO NEARLY EVERY COMMUNITY IN THE STATE. IT WAS NEVER FUNDED...IT'S PAST TIME TO BEGIN STATE FUNDING FOR THIS CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENT."

— Former Governors Kean and Florio,
Star-Ledger Op-Ed April 9, 2017

www.prekourway.org

Despite these efforts and the raised priority for pre-k in the school district and community, many 3- and 4-year-olds in Newton continue to wait for access to high-quality pre-k - and are only some of the 50,000 children waiting statewide every year. Newton's Superintendent of Schools, Dr. G. Kennedy Greene, hopes that additional pre-k access can be provided in Newton as promised by the 2008 law. While waiting for the law to be funded, Dr. Greene and the Newton Public Schools are moving ahead with a plan to add up to three more classrooms to their current location, and are excited to work with local providers to meet the demand for pre-k access in Newton. Dr. Greene says, "We can't possibly have

enough classroom space even with the long-ago promised state funding and our planned building expansion. It is important for us to collaborate with area providers to meet the demand from our community for high-quality pre-k for all of our 3- and 4-year-olds."

Working with the community, the Newton Public Schools have prioritized pre-k education - and the benefits that it provides for their youngest citizens. Many communities do this while waiting for NJ's 2008 state law to be funded. Let your legislators know that you place a priority on our state's youngest citizens. Hundreds of communities - and 50,000 NJ kids - should already have NJ's full-day pre-k as promised in 2008. Let your legislators know you want pre-k!

bit.ly/2c5LRNV