



PRE-K OUR WAY

Prepared for school, ready for success.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Pre-K Our Way: Your Way to Bring Preschool to Your Children
and Your Community.

WHAT IS PRE-K OUR WAY?

Pre-K Our Way is a nonprofit, nonpartisan effort that helps communities bring New Jersey's high-quality pre-k to their children. It's not a school and not connected with any school, but an initiative to bring preschool programs to all of the communities who have been waiting years for the state legislature to deliver them as promised. Pre-K Our Way wants to expand the quality preschool model for 3- to 4-year-olds that New Jersey already has—through a law that already exists—but has never been fully implemented.

WHO IS INVOLVED WITH PRE-K OUR WAY, AND HOW?

Pre-K Our Way is a nonprofit organization funded through support from a number of leading foundations and philanthropists in New Jersey; it is coordinated through a diverse group of committed business leaders, parents, foundations, early childhood educators, community leaders, interested citizens and elected officials who are determined to make sure each child gets a strong start in life through effective preschool education. As a nonpartisan organization, Pre-K Our Way is led by a growing Leadership Group—including former Republican Governor Tom Kean and former Democratic Governor Jim Florio—and welcomes the support of anyone who wants our children to be prepared for school and ready for success. Visit our website at www.prekourway.org for more information.

WHAT DOES PRE-K OUR WAY PLAN TO DO?

Pre-K Our Way's mission is clear and focused: expand New Jersey's existing high-quality preschool to more 3- to 4-year-olds in more of our state's communities. To accomplish this, Pre-K Our Way works to develop the public and political will to have legislative action result in expansion of New Jersey's existing, high-quality pre-k program, and increase access and availability of our state's public pre-k program. Currently, fewer than 40 districts—out of more than 600—have New Jersey's existing public preschool program. Pre-K Our Way believes that where your children live shouldn't determine whether or not they have access to pre-k; other communities have it—it's time to bring pre-k to your community.

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HOW WILL PRE-K OUR WAY ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION?

Our initiative will do three things:

- Create opinion leaders and supporters—community residents, parents, other family members, early childhood education advocates and educators, media, business and community leaders—to spread the word about the importance of pre-k and the need to offer the program to more 3- to 4-year-old children in communities throughout New Jersey
- Educate the Legislature on the value of pre-k programs in improving educational outcomes and the need to extend the program to more communities in the state
- Support a local organizing effort to develop demand for these services that will translate into action by the Legislature and Governor

IS THIS A PUBLIC TAKEOVER OF PRIVATELY PROVIDED PRESCHOOL?

No. Pre-K Our Way and New Jersey law support a mixed-delivery system of public supports and public/private implementation. Your community chooses: Public pre-k can be implemented through public schools, community for-profit, nonprofit or faith-based providers, or private providers.

SHOULDN'T WE FIX OUR K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM BEFORE INVESTING IN PRESCHOOL?

We need to improve K-12 education *and* invest in preschool. It's not either/or; it's both. Quality preschool programs give children a strong start by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to do well in school. We'll make greater progress when well-prepared children, children who have received high-quality preschool education, enter improved K-12 schools that are well prepared to help them continue to succeed.

HOW CAN SOMEONE GET INVOLVED—OR STAY INVOLVED—WITH PRE-K OUR WAY?

There are lots of ways! Right now, you can share your story, sign up to show your support, or download resources to educate others. Visit the website at www.prekourway.org, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter to learn more and get immediate updates about Pre-K Our Way.

The most direct way you can get involved—or stay involved—is to let your legislators know that you support pre-k expansion. Visit our website at prekourway.org/write-your-legislator/ to send a personal email directly to each of your elected representatives in Trenton. Also, watch our website for Pre-K Our Way's Community Communication meetings to help you be a voice for pre-k expansion in the 2017 Gubernatorial and Legislative election discussions. One more way: help organize a local community meeting to share the message of fairness and access to NJ's state-funded, full-day pre-k in more communities. We've already held meetings in 80+ local communities. Make your community one of the next ones! 50,000 NJ kids are waiting.

WHAT CAN EACH PERSON DO NOW?

Let your legislators know that you support pre-k expansion! Share info about Pre-K Our Way with friends, family, neighbors, colleagues, business and community leaders, elected officials and others within your community!

The best way to keep informed about progress and upcoming activities is to like Pre-K Our Way on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. More immediately, supporters are encouraged to write personal opinion letters or op-eds to their local news outlets and use social media outlets (personal Facebook, Twitter, blogs, community forums, online commentary in professional or community publications, etc.) to express personal support for New Jersey's existing high-quality pre-k education and the need to bring it to more 3- to 4-year-old children in our state.

We have a great opportunity to bring pre-k our way. We have momentum: Pre-K has become a priority issue because people, the press and politicians are all talking about the need to expand high-quality pre-k to more communities. NOW is our best chance to make sure pre-k comes our way. NOW is the time for us to raise our voices. New Jersey has many challenges and important priorities—we want pre-k for our kids as one of those priorities. Your children won't get pre-k unless state leaders know you want it—and hear you loud and clear!

MORE

NEW JERSEY'S PRESCHOOL PROGRAM: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL?

Preschool provides tangible benefits for children, their families, our schools and our communities. Those with preschool do better in school; those who don't start behind and have trouble catching up. In fact, New Jersey is a national leader in providing high-quality pre-k programs. Children who attend New Jersey's existing pre-k programs achieve at a higher rate, with a 20%-40% increase in elementary school test scores. Quality preschool enables us to give children a strong start, get them ready for school and move more children forward without fear of leaving some behind.

WHO IS BEING UNDERSERVED BY THE CURRENT SYSTEM?

Although New Jersey recognizes the importance of preschool, currently only fewer than 40 communities benefit from New Jersey's proven preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds—fewer than 40 out of more than 600 school districts. The New Jersey State Legislature adopted a state law expanding high-quality preschool programs to more communities, but that law has never been implemented. This represents a significant loss of potential achievement for thousands of New Jersey preschoolers and a lost opportunity for the state to gain better education, health and economic outcomes.

IS NEW JERSEY'S PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FREE?

Yes. The existing state-funded high-quality preschool programs are available to the public in these fewer than 40 communities at no cost. New Jersey has already recognized the value in children by passing a law to expand these programs to communities throughout the state. Pre-K Our Way is determined to see that a law that's already on the books gets funded.

HOW CAN THE COMMUNITIES THAT ALREADY HAVE NEW JERSEY'S EXISTING STATE PROGRAM JOIN THIS EFFORT?

Communities around the state that already have the benefit of New Jersey's high-quality programs are critical to the Pre-K Our Way effort. Pre-K Our Way encourages anyone from these communities to get involved by sharing their impressions and success stories. By sharing these with others around the state, we can help bring more high-quality programs to our communities and our children. Please visit www.prekourway.org to show your support. Or better yet, share your story and inspire others to bring pre-k our way today: prekourway.org/share-your-story. Visit www.prekourway.org for more ways you can help expand opportunity for more 3- and 4-year-olds in our state!

MORE QUESTIONS? You may reach the Pre-K Our Way team at 609-246-0034, ext. 4 or toll free at 844-335-PREK (844-335-7735). You can also email us at info@prekourway.org.