

## Pre-School for Every Four-Year-Old in Rhode Island

Governor Raimondo believes that every child deserves a great education, and that begins with a strong start through high-quality early childhood education before kindergarten. Governor Raimondo proposes to make high-quality Pre-K available to every four-year-old in the state. Universal Pre-K will reduce the financial burden facing families with young children and help ensure that all children are prepared for kindergarten.

### *HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSAL*

- **Guarantee access to every four-year-old.** Currently about 1,000 4-year-olds in Rhode Island participate in the state's full-day Pre-K program, and an additional 1,200 are enrolled in Head Start. By adding about 6,000 additional seats every four-year-old in the state will have access to the program.
- **Rapidly expand seats.** Rhode Island will add about 70 classrooms each year so that every four-year-old who wants a seat in Pre-K has one. New classrooms would be opened in early learning and child care centers, public schools, and Head Start locations and existing classrooms that are part-time or half-day will be converted to full-day, high-quality Pre-K classrooms.
- **Ensure quality.** Rhode Island is already a national leader in Pre-K quality. Every four-year-old in Rhode Island deserves the opportunity to participate in our nationally recognized program. Teacher quality, student-to-teacher ratios, learning time, and program quality will all be managed to ensure Rhode Island remains a national leader.

### *GOVERNOR RAIMONDO HAS ALREADY LED THE WAY IN EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*

- **Governor Raimondo has tripled the number of Pre-K seats since 2015.** Governor Raimondo has more than doubled the state's financial investment in the State Pre-K Program, including increases to match federal funding which allowed three times the number of four-year olds in low-income communities to participate in State Pre-K over the past three years.
- **Made Rhode Island a national leader in Pre-K quality.** In 2017, Rhode Island was one of only three states to be recognized as having a state funded preschool program that meets all 10 new quality standards benchmarks set by NIEER (National Institute for Early Education Research).
- **Implemented Full Day Kindergarten across the Entire State.** In 2015, Governor Raimondo brought full day Kindergarten to every five-year-old in Rhode Island and increased funding to every city and town to help all school districts complete implementation of full-day K by September 2016.
- **Set Statewide Goal to Double Third-Grade Reading Proficiency by 2025.** In her first term, Governor Raimondo announced a goal to double the number of third graders reading at grade level by 2025. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a crucial indicator in a child's development. In 2017, the Governor Raimondo's Children's Cabinet announced a comprehensive cross-sector action plan to reach her goal and increasing access to high-quality Pre-K is a key step.

### *UNIVERSAL PRE-K IS A GOOD INVESTMENT*

- **Universal Pre-K will have positive impacts on all students' lives.**
  - There are long-term benefits of Pre-K including improved test scores, reduced referrals to special education, a lower chance of repeating a grade, and increased high school graduation rates.
- **Universal Pre-K will yield Rhode Islanders about \$9 for every \$1 invested.**
  - Investments in Pre-K pay off down the road with higher high-school graduation rates, higher educational attainment levels, increased lifetime earnings, and reduced crime. According to methodology from the Center for American Progress, the potential benefit to Rhode Island's economy could be as much as \$230.3M per year.
- **Universal Pre-K supports working families.**
  - Child care costs are a significant burden on working families, who spend an average of \$10,000 or more on child care each year. All day Pre-K will reduce this financial burden on families with young children.
- **Universal Pre-K will increase equality.**
  - Universal Pre-K programs help close achievement gaps and have a significant positive effect on educational outcomes for low-income students.

## *DETAILS*

### **What does “universal” mean?**

- The common definition of universal Pre-K is 70% access, which is similar to the percentage of 5-year-olds in full-day Kindergarten in public school.

### **What is the plan for expansion?**

- 70% of access = 7000 pre-k seats
- Mixed model of expansion; classrooms would be opened in early learning and childcare centers, public schools, and Head Start locations
- Add about 1,400 additional seats

### **Who is eligible for Pre-K?**

- All four-year-olds in every community in Rhode Island would be eligible for universal Pre-K.
- Currently there are State Pre-K programs in 11 communities including Central Falls, Cranston, East Providence, Johnston, Newport, North Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, Warwick, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

### **Will students have to attend Pre-K?**

- No. Attendance for pre-k will not be mandatory.

### **Will we have enough teachers?**

- Currently only about 28% of newly certified Pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers are hired each year in Rhode Island, therefore there are many certified pre-k teachers who will be looking for employment.
- Expanding State Pre-K will create hundreds of new jobs for Rhode Islanders. Programs such as Real Jobs RI and RI Promise will help provide opportunities for more Rhode Island's to become pre-K teachers if they want to.

### **Will transportation be offered to Pre-K programs?**

- Transportation will not be included in the proposal. Most universal Pre-K programs do not offer transportation because of the high cost and safety concerns over transporting 4-year-olds.