

District of Columbia

Background

Public Pre-Kindergarten Program

The District of Columbia offers universal, full-day pre-kindergarten for three- and four-year-olds. The District's uniform per-student funding formula, used to allocate funding to the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) as well as charter schools, allows both DCPS and charter schools to receive per-pupil funding for every three- and four-year-old student that they enroll.¹

The D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) administers the uniform per-student funding formula. DCPS's Office of Early Learning and Specialized Education oversees preschool programs operated in DCPS schools, and the D.C. Public Charter School Board oversees preschool programs operated by charter schools.² Community-based preschool programs not operated by DCPS or charter schools can also apply to receive pre-K funding through the D.C. Public Pre-Kindergarten program administered by OSSE.

To enroll in pre-K, a child must be a D.C. resident and three or four years old by September 30 of the program year. Charter schools that receive more applications for pre-K than the number of available seats admit children through a lottery, as they would for any other grade. DCPS schools award enrollment priority to children living within the school's attendance area, but these students do not have the same right to enroll in their neighborhood school for pre-K that they do for K-12.

Charter schools in D.C.

D.C. allows start-up and conversion charter schools. The D.C. Public Charter School Board has served as the sole authorizer since 2007.³

Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

Existing charter schools interested in offering pre-K must apply through their authorizer, the D.C. Public Charter School Board, to add pre-K to their charter. New charter schools wishing to offer pre-K should include it in their charter applications. Once approved, charter schools can enroll pre-K students and include pre-K students in their enrollment count for the uniform per-student funding formula, up to the number of students allowed by the school's charter.



TOTAL SCORE

50/50

D.C.'s climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **hospitable**

- + There are no state statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K.
- + Compared to K-12 funding levels, pre-K program funding is sufficient to attract charters.
- + The size of the pre-K program does not limit charter access to funding.
- + The funding, application, or approval processes are not barriers to charter access.
- + Automatic enrollment from charter pre-K to kindergarten is not prohibited in legislation or practice.



Barriers

Are there any statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K?

+ **No.** D.C. charter school and pre-K laws both explicitly allow charter schools to offer pre-K and access the funding to do so. Fifty-eight charter schools in the District offer pre-K, including five that only offer pre-K and one that offers pre-K and adult education.

Is the per-pupil funding of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

+ **No.** Pre-K program funding is sufficient to attract charters. Under the uniform per-student funding formula, charter schools receive a per-student rate for preschool students that is 130 percent of what they receive for K-12 students, and receive an additional \$3,000 per student facilities allowance for both pre-K and K-12 students.⁴

Is the size of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

+ **No.** The size of the pre-K program does not limit charter access to funding. Eighty-six percent of three- and four-year-olds in the District attend publicly funded pre-K.

Is the application, approval, and/or funding process a barrier to charter access?

+ **No.** The application, approval, and funding processes are not barriers to charters accessing funding for pre-K in D.C.

Is automatic enrollment from pre-K to kindergarten prohibited in legislation or practice?

+ **No.** Charter schools that offer both pre-K and kindergarten can automatically enroll their pre-K students into the school's kindergarten program.

Recommendations

No recommendations are offered since the District of Columbia's existing policies do not currently present any barriers to charter schools' ability to serve preschoolers or access District funding for pre-K.



	Public Pre-Kindergarten Program	Charter schools in Washington, D.C.
Year created	Launched in 2008 ⁵	Charter law enacted in 1996 ⁶
Children in the District	14,450 three- and four-year-olds in D.C. ⁷	82,706 school-age children in D.C. ⁸
Children served	12,426 children served 86 percent of three- and four-year-olds ⁹	36,823 students served 44.5 percent of school-age population 107 charter schools ¹⁰
Charters offering pre-K	Fifty-eight charter schools in D.C. offer pre-K. ¹¹	Fifty-three charter schools in D.C. offer elementary programs. ¹²
Funding	Providers receive \$12,719 to serve three-year-olds and \$12,340 to serve four-year-olds. ¹³	Charter schools receive \$20,086 to serve K–12 students. ¹⁴

Endnotes

1 Office of the State Superintendent of Education, “Early Learning Services for Parents: Pre-Kindergarten Services,” <http://osse.DC.gov/service/early-learning-services-parents-pre-Kindergarten-services>.

2 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013: State Preschool Yearbook” (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013), <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf>.

3 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: District of Columbia,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/DC/>.

4 Government of the District of Columbia, “Frequently Asked Questions: Proposed FY15 Uniform per Student Funding Formula,” <http://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20Proposed%20FY15%20UPSFF%20with%20appendices.pdf>.

5 Bernardine Watson, “A Case Study of the Pre-K for All D.C. Campaign: How Pre-K for All Became the Law of the Land in Washington, D.C.” (New York, NY and Battle Creek, MI: Foundation for Child Development and W. K. Kellogg Foundation, November 2010), <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Pre-K%20for%20All%20DC%20Case%20Study.pdf>.

6 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: District of Columbia.”

7 Interview with OSSE Early Learning representative, January 14, 2015.

8 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 five-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” www.census.gov/acs. All children in households, three to seventeen years old.

9 Interview with OSSE Early Learning representative, January 14, 2015.

10 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: District of Columbia.”

11 District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, search page, <http://www.dcpsb.org/find-a-school>. The District allows preschool-only charter schools. One LEA, AppleTree, operates five campuses serving only preschool students. Another, Briya, operates one campus serving both pre-K and adult education students.

12 Ibid.

13 Interview with OSSE Early Learning representative, January 14, 2015.

14 Larry Maloney et al., “Charter School Funding: Inequality Expands,” Washington, D.C. section (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform, School Choice Demonstration Project, April 2014), <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/charter-funding-inequity-expands-dc.pdf>.