

Boston Universal Pre-K: A Timeline History



1873

- ▶▶ Boston admitted children ages 3-7 for what was known as kindergarten in the 1873-74 school year. Several changes were made to the entry age for school over the next several decades.

1934

- ▶▶ During the Great Depression, the Federal Government awarded Boston emergency relief funds to start a nursery school program, admitting children 3-5 years of age in 7 schools across Boston. The program was open for about 7 years. The age of entry for school continued to shift over the next several decades.

1998

- ▶▶ Boston opened its first 3 public early education centers.

2005

- ▶▶ Full-day pre-k began for all 4-year-olds after Mayor Thomas Menino made a call for BPS to provide it.
- ▶▶ BPS established the Department of Early Childhood.

2006

- ▶▶ The Barr Foundation committed to contributing \$3 million to be used over 3 years to expand access to pre-k, purchase curriculum, and coach teachers.
- ▶▶ The OWL and Building Blocks curricula were used across all programs.

2007

- ▶▶ The Boston Early Childhood Research Practice Partnership (RPP) was created to study early childhood outcomes in Boston and beyond.

2013

- ▶▶ Boston K1 in Diverse Settings (K1DS) began in January 2013. This 2.5-year partnership between BPS, Thrive in 5, and community-based providers expanded the BPS pre-k program to 14 community-based classrooms. Boston K1DS continued until June 2015.

2014

- ▶▶ The State of Massachusetts was awarded \$15 million through the federal Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG), with Boston as one of the five participating cities.
- ▶▶ The RPP team began the Sustaining the Pre-K Boost Study, seeking to estimate

the impact of Boston pre-k on children's grade retention, special education placement, and test scores through 3rd grade.

2015

- ▶▶ BPS launched the Focus on Pre-K curriculum for 4-year-olds.
- ▶▶ Boston received just over \$4 million through the Preschool Expansion Grant. PEG created a partnership between BPS, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and community-based providers in Boston to expand high-quality pre-k. Funding continued until December 2019.

2016

- ▶▶ The inaugural Boston Universal Pre-K Advisory Committee published its advisory report in April 2016: "Investing in Our Future: Recommendations to Inform City Planning for High-Quality Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Boston," on guidance for establishing universal pre-k in Boston.
- ▶▶ The ExCEL P-3 Study (Expanding Children's Early Learning from Pre-K to Third Grade Study), part of the RPP and led by MDRC, began when the first cohort of students entered Boston pre-K in the fall of 2016. This longitudinal study tracks the impact of different factors on pre-k and kindergarten student outcomes.

2018

- ▶▶ The book Children at the Center was published in July 2018, creating an account of the development of Boston's successful pre-k program.

2019

- ▶▶ The Boston Universal Pre-K Study - a mixed-methods implementation study of the expanded mixed-method UPK program in Boston - began in January 2019.
- ▶▶ Boston Mayor Marty Walsh announced a \$15 million investment in UPK in April 2019 to guarantee equitable access to free, high-quality pre-k for all 4-year-olds in Boston.
- ▶▶ The Boston Universal Pre-K initiative officially began in the 2019-2020 school year, as BPS began funding community-based providers to expand access to high-quality pre-k.

2020

- ▶▶ The Early Childhood Family Council was launched during the 2020-2021 school year as part of the UPK governance model in order to engage families with BPS and to receive feedback on early childhood curriculum and program components.

2021

- ▶▶ Boston Mayor Kim Janey announced in July 2021 that UPK would serve 3-year-olds as part of ongoing expansion and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶▶ Boston UPK started to serve a limited number of 3-year-olds in addition to 4-year-olds in a new pilot program during the 2021-2022 school year.

2022

- ▶▶ Boston Mayor Michelle Wu announced the creation of the City of Boston Office of Early Childhood in February 2022 - in order to serve families with children 0-5 and better integrate care across settings.
- ▶▶ Boston Mayor Michelle Wu announced a \$20 million investment in July 2022 for the 2022-23 school year to expand Boston's UPK program, the largest 1-year funding commitment to date. This expansion included a new funding formula, an increase in seats in community-based provider settings, and plans to serve family child care centers in the 2023-24 school year.
- ▶▶ The BPS Department of Early Childhood and Children's Funding Project finished coordinating a yearlong working group of invested partners to develop a cost model to inform funding of UPK community-based classrooms. The funding model was reformulated to better serve providers by funding entire classrooms rather than individual students.
- ▶▶ The RPP team began the Impact of the Boston Pre-K Program Through Early Adulthood Study in July 2022, seeking to estimate the impact of Boston pre-k on students' school progress, school engagement, academic achievement, educational trajectory, and education attainment through age 20.
- ▶▶ The Focus on 3s curriculum was launched in the 2022-23 school year for classrooms of 3-year-old preschoolers.

2023

- ▶▶ A yearlong working group of BPS staff, family child care providers (FCCs), and other partners completed its work preparing to integrate FCCs into the Boston UPK portfolio.
- ▶▶ Boston UPK releases its first application specific to family child care providers to join the program portfolio.
- ▶▶ Initial planning for a new multi-age aligned Focus curriculum began for toddlers through age 4.

Note: Timeline published July 2023