

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Pilot Grant Program

□ Background

The Fiscal Year 2007 State budget provided \$4.6 million in funding for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to pilot Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK). In Fiscal Year 2008, the Legislature supported an increase of \$2.5 million and in Fiscal Year 2009 an increase of \$3.8 million (after \$1.25 million in mid-year budget reductions), raising total current support for UPK to \$10.9 million. The purpose of the UPK Pilot is to promote school readiness and positive outcomes for participating children and to inform the longer-term implementation of universally accessible, affordable, high quality early education. Preschool programs that serve at-risk and low-income children are prioritized during the pilot phase. The pilot is the first step of a multi-component, comprehensive UPK system.

□ UPK Pilot Goals

- Provide quality grants to programs to meet and maintain UPK criteria;
- Define measurable quality program characteristics that lead to school readiness;
- Enhance the quality of services for children in UPK classrooms and especially for children at-risk of school failure;
- Maximize parent choice by ensuring participation from all program types within a mixed public and private service delivery system; and
- Ensure that programs are effectively measuring and supporting children's progress across *all* developmental domains.

□ UPK Pilot Programs at a Glance

Current Classroom Quality grants are awarded to 293 UPK programs, with 481 classrooms/homes, across all settings (originally funded in FY07, FY08 or FY09) including:

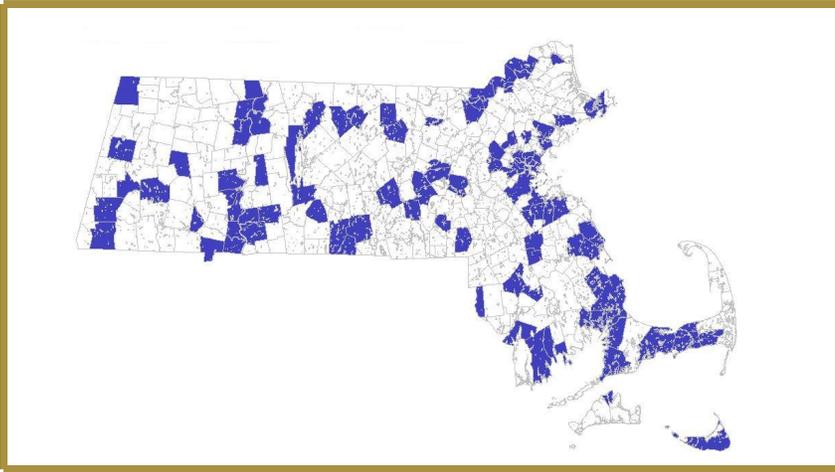
- 145 centers
- 129 family child care providers
- 19 public and private schools
- 6,600 preschool children enrolled in UPK classrooms/homes
- Grant awards range from \$5,000 to \$200,000
- Quality grants are in addition to current funding



FY09 UPK Pilot Quality Requirements

UPK pilot quality classrooms must:

1. Be EEC Licensed or License Exempt;
2. Use an EEC selected child assessment tool to measure and communicate children's progress;
3. Use *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences* based on the *MA K-12 Curriculum Frameworks*;
4. Provide access to full-day full-year services for working families; and
5. Be nationally accredited by:
 - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC);
 - New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC); or
 - National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher (for family child care providers).



Programs with UPK Classroom Quality Grants funded in 97 Massachusetts cities and towns.

□ How will UPK Help Children and Families?

UPK classroom grants may be used to:

- Increase teacher salaries and benefits;
- Strengthen teaching practice and improve teacher skills;
- Help programs better understand and communicate children's progress;
- Support accreditation activities;
- Provide additional services to meet children's physical, social, and emotional needs;
- Provide or facilitate access to full-day, full-year services for working families;
- Improve the classroom environment through new educational materials and information technology equipment;
- Help facilitate smooth transitions to kindergarten for children; and
- Support the engagement of children's families.

□ UPK Pilot Fulfills EEC Enabling Statute

EEC is legislatively required to:

"... oversee the development and implementation of a program of voluntary, universally accessible, high-quality early childhood education to all preschool-aged children in the Commonwealth, subject to appropriation;"

"...encourage family choice by ensuring a mixed system of high-quality public and private programs, with local points of entry, staffed by well-qualified professionals;"

"...advance the quality of early education and care programs in order to support the healthy development of children and preparation for their success in school."

Starting Small...Thinking Big!

EEC has designed the UPK Pilot to make sure that any large scale, long term investments in early education are well spent. The Pilot is designed to ensure:

- Accountable use of public funds;
- Positive outcomes for children;
- Measurable impact on program and teacher quality; and
- Sustainable short and long-term implementation of universally accessible, high quality early education.

Preparing for Future UPK Programs

Beginning in FY07, EEC has provided funding for UPK Pilot Assessment Planning grants. Planning funds are helping programs implement developmentally appropriate assessment, and positioning them for participation in the UPK program in future years. EEC is also developing a training and technical assistance infrastructure to assist programs with this work.

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