

Improve and Expand Public PreK by Voting

Yes On 2



What a YES on 2 Vote Means for PreK Education

PreK programs in Maine are not meeting the needs of students who need them the most. In 2015-16, nearly 29% (54 out of 188) of Maine school districts that enrolled kindergarten students had no PreK program. That's **nearly 8,000 students who enrolled in Kindergarten, but didn't attend a public PreK**, despite extensive research showing the benefits of high quality preschool. The lack of available programs, due to a lack of funding, is one of the major reasons so many students are left without the opportunity to attend a public PreK program.

Currently, only 2% of Maine's total allocation under the school funding formula is attributable to public preschool programs. The Stand Up For Students initiative, which is **Question 2 on the November ballot, will increase funding for public schools by \$157 million**, bringing state funding up to the voter mandated 55% level. Of that additional funding, **public PreK programs will see a 15.2% increase, which equates to \$3.4 million more.**

Total PreK enrollment numbers, including by county, can be found in Appendix A.

The Need for More PreK

An Independent Review of Maine's Essential Programs and Services Funding Act by Lawrence O. Picus and Associates, shows that high quality preschool, particularly for students from lower income backgrounds, significantly affects future student academic achievement as well as other desired social and community outcomes.¹ Longitudinal studies show that students from lower income backgrounds who experience a high quality, full-day preschool program perform better in learning basic skills in elementary school, score higher on academic goals in middle and high school, attend college at a greater rate, and as adults, earn higher incomes and engage in less socially-undesirable behavior.

By themselves, preschool programs can reduce achievement gaps linked to race and income by half, according to the Picus review. Furthermore, there is increasing recognition that preschool should be provided for all students. Research shows that this strategy produces significant gains for children from middle class backgrounds and even larger impacts for students from lower income backgrounds.²

Research conducted at Rice University³ shows a child at the age of three in a low income household has heard 30 million fewer words by the time they enter school than those who come from professional households. The research shows long-lasting implications of this gap, showing by the time that same child is nine or ten, s/he is not able to grasp certain concepts in language development and reading comprehension that her middle-class peers long ago mastered. Suzen Polk-Hoffses, a PreK teacher in Milbridge and a 2014 Maine Teacher of the Year Semi-Finalist, sees this gap firsthand from students, many who live in poverty and have not attended pre-school. Polk-Hoffses previously taught kindergarten and has since moved to PreK. This switch gave her a unique look into the true needs of Maine's youngest students.



30 MILLION LESS
the difference in the number of words a child in a low income household will hear compared to a child in a professional household.

1 Barnett, 2007; Barnett & Masse, 2007; Karoly et al., 1998; Reynolds et al., 2011; (Barnett, 2011; Camilli, et al., 2010; Reynolds, et al., 2001, 2011; Schweinhart et al., 2005).

2 Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004

3 Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Education, Rice University. "The Thirty Million Word Gap." <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=336665&an=1>

“When they came to me at the kindergarten level I was using all this rich wonderful expressive language and they didn’t know what I was saying, they don’t have that background language. This causes our children to fall behind. I would read a simple story with concepts you think a child may have heard, but they haven’t. These children are not hearing it when they live in poverty and can’t attend pre-school. A few years ago I had a child who couldn’t name a single letter when they came in. Usually, in kindergarten a child can identify the letters in their name. This child was not able to identify a letter from a number to a shape. Maybe the child was brought up with the thought that—my child will learn it in school. However, with that mindset, the child is already behind the curve and he was only in kindergarten,” said Polk-Hoffses, a current PreK teacher in Washington County.



PreK In Maine

Nearly
8,000
four-year-olds in Maine
did not enroll in public
PreK programs

39.2%
of kindergarten students
attended public PreK

2%
of total allocation dedicated to
PreK programs.

**YES on 2 increases state
PreK funding by**
15.2%

What Question 2 Means for PreK in Maine

The average district currently with a PreK program in Maine is poorer than the average Maine School Administrative Unit (SAU), meaning a higher level of funding is needed from the state to maintain equal opportunities for students, regardless of zip code. If the state funded schools at 55% of the total cost of education, which is what Question 2 would provide, the State’s contribution attributable to PreK would have risen from \$22.5 to \$26 million in the current year. The additional funding from the State is especially needed for PreK programs due to the lack of ability locally to pay for these programs.

Since most districts with PreK are not able to increase property taxes to pay for PreK, Question 2 becomes more important for the youngest students in need. In these poorer communities many parents do not have an ability to pay for a private PreK program, meaning parents rely on the public school to provide their children the early education increasingly deemed necessary. In order to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of zip code, a higher level of funding is needed from the State. Question 2 provides the increased funding needed for this crucial program.

Here are some examples of increases in state funding attributable to PreK if the state funded 55% of the cost of education in 2016-17:

<u>STATE CONTRIBUTION ATTRIBUTABLE TO PREK OPERATING ALLOCATION</u>			
	Total operating allocation for PreK	Current state contribution	State share % increase with a YES ON 2 vote
Auburn	\$1,498,435	\$834,534	15.3%
Bangor	\$1,292,639	\$564,327	23.8%
Lewiston	\$2,214,649	\$1,558,869	8.7%
Portland	\$860,270	\$166,254	72.6%
RSU 17 (Oxford Hills)	\$986,240	\$471,723	17%
RSU 29 (Houlton)	\$690,197	\$491,558	8.8%
RSU 35 (Eliot)	\$1,149,026	\$555,182	19.9%
RSU 39 (Caribou)	\$608,872	\$439,111	8.3%
RSU 50 (Sherman)	\$297,726	\$191,790	9.9%
RSU 54 (Skowhegan)	\$838,669	\$474,050	14.5%
RSU 68 (Dover-Foxcroft)	\$265,728	\$146,369	15.6%
RSU 80 (Guilford)	\$250,043	\$114,431	22.1%

PreK Return on Investment

According to the Picus review, research shows there is a return over time of eight to ten dollars for every one dollar invested in high quality preschool programs. In addition, a 2003 study of state-funded pre-school programs in six states—California, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, New York and Ohio—found, that children from lower income families start catching up to their middle income peers when they attend a preschool program.⁴ A 2007 study showed that preschool programs in New Jersey’s urban districts had not only significant short-term cognitive and social impacts, but also long term, positive impacts on students who enrolled in them, closing the achievement gap by 40 percent in second grade for a two year preschool program.⁵

In a Kennebec Journal column entitled *Early education is one of our most important investments: Quality care and education programs for young children are proven workforce and economic development tools*, Ben Gilman, senior government specialist at the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Robert Gregoire, chief of police in Augusta and Rep. Matthew Pouliot, R-Augusta acknowledged the need for quality early education programs stating:

“...now is a good time to talk about how important early care and education of Maine kids is toward ensuring they are on a path to success — helping move Maine forward economically and keeping Maine’s communities safe. As representatives of Maine’s business community, the Maine State Legislature, and law enforcement, we strongly believe that reaching our state’s kids early in their lives, so they will learn the skills they need to be contributing members of society in the future, is the most important investment we as a state can make.

The earlier we start reaching kids in quality early childhood education programs like pre-K and Head Start, the more positive the outcomes will be for them, our communities, and Maine’s economy down the road. Our students will be healthier and stronger, ready to learn when they start school,

4 (Jacobson, 2003).

5 Frede, Jung, Barnett et al., 2007

and more likely to graduate from high school on time and pursue secondary education. They will be better, more highly skilled workers, and they also will be less likely to be involved in crime. This is especially true for Maine’s at-risk children and our kids from lower-income families across the state.”

Increased Need for PreK Due to Population Changes

Maine children living in poverty continues to increase. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count book:

- **Children living in poverty in Maine has increased from 16% in 2008 to 19% in 2014, that’s 48,000 children. The poverty level was \$24,008 for a family of two adults and two children in 2014.**
- **Maine Children living in high-poverty areas increased from 3% in 2006-10 to 6% in 2010-14.**
- **Maine Children whose parents lack secure employment has increased from 29% in 2008 to 32% in 2014, that’s 82,000 children.**
- **There are 15,000 young children (3 and 4 years old) not in school in Maine, effecting 55% of children.**

With the increase in poverty among Maine’s children the increase of those students who require free or reduced lunch has increased over the last nine years as well. Free and reduced lunch rates are indicators of poverty among Maine students. The following data is from the Maine Department of Education.

School Year	Number Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	Total Enrollment	Percent Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch
2014-15	85,232	182,990	46.6%
2013-14	82,671	184,367	44.8%
2012-13	81,700	185,767	44%
2011-12	81,556	186,556	43.7%
2010-11	79,769	188,131	42.4%
2009-10	78,101	190,251	41.1%
2008-09	71,786	192,244	37.3%
2007-08	68,770	195,446	35.2%
2006-07	68,147	199,468	34.2%

Source: Maine Department of Education

In Conclusion

Maine public schools have good PreK programs for the students who are fortunate enough to attend. Unfortunately, there are not enough programs to meet the needs of all students, creating inequities among Maine’s children. Research shows high quality PreK programs have profound benefits in creating equal opportunities for all students, helping students who live in poverty the most. Furthermore, data provided by the Maine Department of Education shows the number of students in need continues to increase in Maine. Increased PreK funding is needed to provide for these students. Question 2 will provide Maine schools with \$157 million more in funding, with \$3.4 million attributable to public PreK. In addition to increasing availability of PreK to school districts with current programs, Question 2 will also provide the funding for more school districts to start PreK programs and reach more four-year-olds in the communities in which they live.

Appendix A

Maine PreK Enrollment Numbers

<u>KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED PUBLIC PREK</u>			
	Kindergarten Enrollment	PreK Enrollment Prior Year	% of Students Who Attended Public PreK
2015-16	12,842	5,039	39.2%
2014-15	13,277	5,004	37.7%
2013-14	13,448	4,887	36.3%
2012-13	13,715	4,589	33.5%
2011-12	13,517	4,172	30.9%
2010-11	13,783	3,688	26.8%
2009-10	13,694	2,850	20.8%
2008-09	13,452	2,581	19.2%
2007-08	13,679	2,273	16.6%

Base Enrollment Data from the Maine Department of Education

<u>ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC PREK PROGRAMS IN 2015-16 BY COUNTY</u>				
County	PreK Enrollment	Average K-2 Enrollment	Potential PreK Enrollment	% Enrollment in PreK
Androscoggin	866	1,267	401	68.4%
Aroostook	589	660	71	89.3%
Cumberland	337	2,791	2,454	12.1%
Franklin	174	292	118	59.7%
Hancock	145	476	331	30.5%
Kennebec	762	1,193	431	63.9%
Knox	115	356	241	32.3%
Lincoln	122	280	158	43.6%
Oxford	224	558	334	40.1%
Penobscot	792	1,440	648	55%
Piscataquis	85	153	68	55.7%
Sagadahoc	125	343	218	36.4%
Somerset	282	533	251	52.9%
Waldo	240	393	153	61%
Washington	245	314	69	78.1%
York	295	1,978	1,683	14.9%
TOTAL	5,398	13,026	7,628	

Base Enrollment Data from the Maine Department of Education