



City School District of Albany
2024-25 Legislative Priorities
Equitable Prekindergarten Funding for High Needs Urban Districts

The City School District of Albany has been a leader in prekindergarten programming for more than 30 years, and these programs remain a critical need and a key to student success, especially for students living in poverty. However, the state’s current mechanism for distributing pre-K funds disadvantages children in districts like Albany that were early adopters of pre-K – predominantly high-needs urban districts – by funding early pre-K seats at a lower per-pupil rate than more recent funding sources. This is leading to inequities between school districts statewide, especially as the state invests in new pre-K programs in average- and low-needs school districts.

In a typical year, our district offers approximately 1,025 pre-K seats for 3- and 4-year-old learners citywide. As we continue to build back from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-22, we are serving 865 pre-K students in the current school year.

The ongoing pre-K funding disparity for our school district remains an annual challenge. Our pre-K aid is based on outdated funding formulas – the half-day UPK formula, which supports more than half of our pre-K seats, has been flat for many years and disadvantages districts like Albany that were early implementers of full-day pre-K and chose to spread the funding out to increase the number of students and families served.

In a typical year, we have 552 pre-K seats funded at the half-day rate of \$4,105 per pupil. In 2019-20, New York’s recent merger of all pre-K funding into one stream (with no increase in any of our funding streams) provided Albany with an overall per-pupil pre-K rate of \$5,177. The addition of \$560,000 in pre-K grant funding for the current school year has allowed us to add a new pre-K classroom, serve 80 students and increase our overall per-pupil allocation to \$6,350. We are grateful for these additional funds and this represents a step forward. But we still are far below the rates at which the state currently is investing in new pre-K programming in other districts.

As a result, we have chosen annually to allocate general fund resources to subsidize pre-K in our district. In 2023-24, we are using \$1,314,060 from our general fund to subsidize pre-K, making those resources unavailable for critical programs and services for our K-12 students, especially as we continue to rebuild from the COVID-19 crisis. We believe this general fund investment in pre-K provides a more consistent and stable academic foundation for our youngest learners. We remain fully committed to pre-K and its critical connection to student success and breaking the cycle of poverty.

(more)

VISION STATEMENT

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

Nevertheless, the low per-pupil allocation for our district provides a significant funding and programmatic challenge. This affects our ability to attract and retain high-quality, state-certified Early Childhood, Birth-Grade 2 teachers, resulting in high teacher turnover both year-to-year and within a school year.

We urge the state to revisit its pre-K funding model through an equity lens so that early adopting urban districts like ours have the resources to provide our youngest learners with the strong foundation they need and deserve without compromising our ability to deliver services to the rest of our K-12 population.