



# Childcare as Industrial Policy Blueprint: Lessons from New York City's Pre-K for All Implementation

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## About the Author

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He served as deputy chancellor for early childhood and student enrollment at the New York City Department of Education, where he oversaw implementation of New York City's early childhood programs, including Pre-K and 3-K for All. Through these initiatives, New York City now serves over 100,000 children from birth to age five in free, full-day, high-quality early care and education. Josh also supported the Office of School Enrollment, where he led the first significant school integration efforts in decades.

Josh was previously the chief operating officer for the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), where he helped lead projects critical to the city's economic development agenda. Successes included Applied Sciences NYC, the initiative through which Cornell University and the Technion agreed to build a graduate engineering center on Roosevelt Island in New York City, and the Hunter's Point South project, which will create 5,000 new units of housing on the Queens waterfront.

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### ABOUT THE ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE

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# Introduction

As implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and the CHIPS and Science Act begins, discussion of “industrial policy” has moved from academia and think tanks to the mainstream press. In the *New Yorker*, John Cassidy recently noted the return of “ambitious industrial policy . . . designed to strengthen manufacturing, hasten a green energy transformation, create well-paid jobs, and insure American technological leadership over China” ([Cassidy 2023](#)).

With that attention has come debate over two questions: Do we have the “state capacity”<sup>1</sup> to build the physical infrastructure needed to make a transition to a greener and more competitive economy quickly enough to meet the moment ([Demsas 2022](#); [Lindsey 2021](#))? And do we need to streamline our planning and permitting processes to do it successfully ([Bagley 2021](#); [Klein 2022](#))?

For example, while reminding us to consider ways in which past efforts to build fast and big ran “roughshod” over marginalized communities, then-National Economic Council Director Brian Deese called on the nation to reexamine certain processes, like those for permitting sites for infrastructure projects, as one way to “demand progress over inertia” and “unpack the many constraints that cause America to lag other major countries . . . in delivering ambitious projects on time and on budget” ([Deese 2022](#)).

However, Roosevelt Director of Climate Policy Rhiana Gunn-Wright recently cautioned that reforms to such processes, while having limited impact on timelines, will “make frontline communities more vulnerable to exploitation” and “make it more difficult for there to be a credible means of democratic control and participation” during this period of transformation, risking the erosion of trust needed for success ([Gunn-Wright 2023](#)).

Other scholars of participatory democracy, such as Hollie Russon Gilman at New America, see this as a critical moment not just to defend current processes but to “[revitalize] democracy” by “shar[ing] decision-making power with local communities” in IRA projects ([Laforge, Florini, and Gilman 2023](#)), emulating processes like the participatory budgeting process in New York City, in which residents come together over a series of months to allocate public funds for neighborhood projects ([Sterrenberg 2018](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> Here, “state” refers to government broadly, in contrast to private enterprise, not to a particular level of government.

This report will consider these questions of state capacity and democratic participation in planning by looking back at the recent implementation of universal pre-kindergarten (known as “Pre-K for All”) in NYC in 2014. While this may seem like an odd choice for a case study on industrial policy, this report argues that the program—in which NYC created a free, high-quality pre-kindergarten program serving close to 70,000 four-year-olds in just under two years—was a forerunner of the “new industrial policy.” After making that case, I will show how the experience of implementing Pre-K for All can help us address current questions about democratic planning and industrial policy by:

- Summarizing the implementation of Pre-K for All, focusing on its development and use of state capacity;
- Analyzing the role that the proposal played in the campaign and election of NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio, and demonstrating that it was treated as an electoral mandate by the incoming administration and a broad range of other political actors;
- Exploring the extent to which the effort was subject to democratic processes and checks during implementation, and their positive and negative impacts;
- Examining later efforts at more participatory, democratic planning efforts launched to further the program’s equity goals and share power with important partners; and
- Surfacing potential challenges and tensions that emerge when government teams commit to democratic planning while implementing large-scale industrial policy.

This report ends by looking at a few serious flaws of the Pre-K for All program that could have been addressed by earlier and more democratic planning, and asks several questions:

- Could the program have incorporated more participatory democratic planning in the early stages of implementation within existing democratic structures?
- How can actors within and outside government manage the tensions between participatory planning processes and more traditional democratic processes such as elections and legislative appropriations?
- How much control should be granted to stakeholder groups, as opposed to elected officials and the staff they appoint?

We should not assume answers to these questions: They should be subject to democratic discussion. And these discussions should include more people with experience in implementation roles in government, from disparate areas of industrial policy. The tensions of democratic planning in industrial policy play out differently in different domains, with different stakes, actors, and legacy processes. This topic would benefit especially from case histories from those various fields, and an epistemically humble, ground-up approach to conclusions.

Finally, an appendix briefly describes some promising later examples of early childhood implementation teams in other communities that are addressing the tensions described in the report in creative ways. These kinds of case studies would both help continue the exploration of these questions in early childhood industrial policy and offer lessons for all students of industrial policy implementation.

I approach this topic primarily as a practitioner: As the leader of the implementation efforts at the NYC Department of Education and then deputy chancellor for early childhood from 2014 through 2021, I was immersed in the details of implementing the early childhood programs described here. Before that, I also spent close to seven years working on economic development policy in the Bloomberg administration and served as a legislative aide in the New York City Council. Those experiences led me to see industrial policy more broadly, to view early childhood policy as a key part of it, and to approach broad policy issues through the perspective of the day-to-day work of implementation.

## The Case for Early Childhood Industrial Policy

What does early childhood policy have to do with industrial policy?

One answer to this question is that families need childcare in order to take the new green jobs that our new industrial policy investments will create; early childhood policy is therefore vital as a support to the broader project of making our economy more competitive and sustainable. This is the answer implied by the recent announcement that the administration will require companies taking advantage of CHIPS and Science Act funds to “guarantee affordable, high-quality child care for workers who build or operate a plant” ([Tankersley 2023](#)). This is a true—and important—answer, but not the best one.

Industrial policy is not just about manufacturing, construction, and energy; it is a way of thinking about answers to two fundamental economic questions:

1. **Supply-side vs. demand-side intervention:** Should government focus more resources on creating more of the goods and services people need, rather than creating more programs to subsidize demand for those goods and services?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Part of the argument against subsidizing demand alone, specifically for social goods such as childcare, is that it drives the cost of those services up, requiring more subsidy and creating a vicious cycle ([Hammond, Takash, and Teles 2021](#)).

2. **State capacity:** Does government have the capacity to intervene successfully in a given sector on the supply side through public investment, planning, and program implementation (e.g., [Klein 2021](#); [Yellen 2022](#))?

Bringing the discussion of industrial policy back to these original questions is important because they are meant to prompt us to rethink our approaches to wide ranges of policies and problems, and to think more expansively about potential collective solutions. Under this more productive definition, early childhood fits squarely within the definition of industrial policy. In fact, I would argue that the Biden administration's full articulation of industrial policy *included* its proposed interventions into the care economy proposed in the Build Back Better Act.

It is worth briefly reviewing why this topic should be central to our industrial policy agenda. Early childhood<sup>3</sup> is a strong candidate for public investment within the *traditional* terms of industrial policy because spending in the sector would foster national growth and competitiveness. It is a strategic sector of the economy because it provides important infrastructure for so many others: A US Chamber of Commerce Foundation report examined four states and estimated annual costs to employers ranging from \$414 million in Idaho to \$2.88 billion in Pennsylvania due to childcare-related absences and employee turnover ([US Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2020](#)).

Investment in the sector not only prevents the harm of lost productivity, but also benefits the economy in three ways:

- **Boosting labor force participation.** We need to increase the supply of workers in order to continue to grow the economy, and childcare is a key lever to boosting workforce participation among parents—especially among women ([Konczal 2023](#)). One recent review estimated that a 10 percent decrease in the cost of childcare leads to a 0.5 to 2.5 percent increase in maternal employment ([Morrissey 2017](#)).
- **Improving productivity.** High-quality early care and education has demonstrated both short- and long-term effects on educational outcomes, generally associated with higher labor productivity. For example, a recent randomized study of Boston's preschool program found that children who attended were more likely to graduate high school and attend college ([Gray-Lobe, Pathak, and Walters 2021](#)).

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<sup>3</sup> While this paper focuses on pre-K, and this section on childcare, early childhood industrial policy should include a full spectrum of supports for young children and families, including excellent maternal health care as part of universal health care, paid family leave, a generous child allowance from birth to age three, a fully funded early intervention and preschool special education system, and free childcare during working hours from birth to public school entry, including robust support for dual language learners.

- ***Bringing opportunity to talent.*** Finally, studies of early care and education programs beginning at birth targeted to disadvantaged groups—such as children in low-income communities of color—have demonstrated significant improvements in their long-term education, health, and employment outcomes, leading economist James Heckman to estimate a 13 percent per year return on investment for similar programs ([The Heckman Equation n.d.](#)).

There are also powerful reasons for an early childhood industrial policy that lie outside the traditional concerns of industrial policy, but that are vital to building a strong and healthy society. For one, early childhood industrial policy has the potential to disrupt the production and reproduction of racialized poverty and economic inequality by decreasing the disadvantage children in marginalized communities face in school as early as kindergarten and by improving the economic prospects of their families by reducing or eliminating the cost of childcare, which takes up a disproportionate share of families' incomes ([Tinsley and Dewan 2020](#), 669-70).

It also has the power to advance gender equity by addressing the profound imbalance that our current organization of care creates. During WWII, we funded a nationwide network of state-run nurseries so mothers could work while men went to war. These nurseries had positive impacts for the children who attended. But since then, our structures and rhetoric have largely reinforced the idea that childcare is the responsibility of each family, and ultimately, of each mother ([Feloni 2021](#)).

Further, well-supported early childhood educators create environments in which children with different backgrounds and experiences begin to learn social skills and develop emotional capacities that underpin successful democratic practice—from sharing and taking turns, to taking others' perspectives and working through negative emotions. Early childhood settings are children's first social worlds, and shape their early conceptions of how we can learn and govern together (Moss, Dahlberg, and Pence 2013, 75-80).

Perhaps most critically, an early childhood industrial policy is a necessary part of creating a just society. Without such a policy, our care system depends on free labor in the home and vastly underpaid labor in a variety of other settings—mostly from women of color. We use the language of love and care to justify and camouflage this inequity when we don't simply ignore it ([Federici 1975](#), 1). Families struggle to make ends meet without all their adults working, but somehow we expect them to care for children as well, leaving them exhausted and, increasingly, sick and needing to miss work ([Bhattarai 2022](#)). This is not only a case of market failure, or even only a failure of the market system. It is a failure to articulate a

coherent and workable—let alone just—set of ideas about how we should care for our children and each other.

## New York City’s Pre-K for All as “New Industrial Policy”

All these concerns motivated New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio and his team to create the Pre-K for All plan, funding the proposal through a tax on those earning above \$500,000. It was the central policy proposal of de Blasio’s successful campaign for mayor of New York City in 2012-13 ([Ramirez 2012](#), 2; [Hawkins 2012](#)), and became part of the public dialogue about the Democratic mayoral primary and general election in 2013, marking one of the first public debates about this generation of industrial policy.

As Jonathan Rosen, a leading political strategist who advised the campaign, recalled in an interview, “I think it was incredibly important, as it symbolized a concrete thing that government could do for people. In a lot of ways, that’s what infrastructure is and that’s what industrial policy is . . . progressive government delivering concrete things for people” (Rosen 2023).

Pre-K for All is an important example of a moment during which a municipal government answered yes to both of the fundamental questions of industrial policy identified at the beginning of the previous section:

- **Supply-side strategy:** First, NYC built out the *supply* of pre-kindergarten programs and made them free for all—essentially creating a public system in what had been a private market out of reach to most—rather than subsidizing demand by issuing vouchers, tax credits, or scholarships to families.
- **Building state capacity:** Second, by reaching the goal of providing universal access within 20 months, the effort demonstrated the ability of the municipal government to deliver a desired good at scale on a rapid timeline. Working across 1,850 sites—including district schools, programs run by community-based partners under contract with the city, and programs run by the city in new spaces acquired and built out by the city—NYC increased the capacity of the system in under two years to offer a free, full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten seat to every four-year-old who applied.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The de Blasio administration defined “full-day” as the full school day and school year, which was 6 hours and 20 minutes in NYC. Later, we used Head Start and childcare funds to add hours of coverage to each day and weeks of coverage to the year for low-income New Yorkers.



The number of children enrolled in full-day pre-kindergarten grew from 19,287 in school year 2013-14 to 68,647 in school year 2015-16—more students than in the entire Boston school system. Over the course of the eight years of the de Blasio administration, its early childhood programs enrolled half a million children—more children than there are people living in Atlanta, GA ([US Census Bureau n.d.](#)).<sup>5</sup> Yet because childcare is not widely understood as an industry, this effort has been overlooked in the industrial policy discussions of the past few years.

## New York City's Pre-K for All: Industrial Policy Implementation

Soon after winning the election, Mayor-elect De Blasio named a team, including the author, to focus on implementing his proposed program ([Hamilton 2013](#)).

The mayor and his leadership team decided that the administration needed to fulfill the campaign promise of universal pre-K within two years. There were several reasons: First, they were concerned that opponents of the tax increase would use a slower timeline as an excuse to delay debate over it, giving them more time to organize against it. Second, once the effort to raise taxes failed (see below), they feared that if the administration did not deliver within that time frame, Governor Andrew Cuomo, who was largely hostile to the administration, would use that as an opportunity to reduce or withdraw the needed state funds. Efforts to paint the initiative as unrealistic and wasteful gave credence to those fears ([New York Post Editorial Board 2014](#)). Finally, the mayor reminded his team that with each year that passed, another cohort of children missed the only opportunity they would ever get for pre-kindergarten.

He decided to make the timeline public and hold himself and his administration accountable to it. In January 2014, as de Blasio made the traditional mayoral trip to the state capital to begin discussions about the state budget, his administration released a plan to deliver Pre-K for All by the first day of school in 2015, 20 months after the beginning of his term, and to achieve the majority of this expansion by the first day of school in 2014 ([Office of the Mayor et al. 2014](#)).

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<sup>5</sup> Author's calculations include enrollment in 3-K, the administration's program to serve three-year-olds, begun in 2017, and its family childcare networks, which served children from six weeks to four years old in home-based settings.

Because time was so limited, the mayor directed the implementation team to begin work as if the funding was secured and the plan would proceed. We focused on several key areas; I will list them briefly, and then describe how the administration managed all the activities as one overarching project.

## *Physical Infrastructure Planning*

The implementation of Pre-K for All entailed a vast physical infrastructure challenge—planning, procuring, siting, permitting, and equipping thousands of new classrooms across hundreds of new sites in every neighborhood of New York City. The challenge drew on every part of city government. Since much of the current debate over industrial policy implementation focuses on the siting and permitting of physical infrastructure, this case study seems especially relevant.

### Assessing pre-K “demand”

A first critical task was to determine how many children would attend Pre-K for All and where those children lived, so that the teams tasked with setting up new seats would know where to put them. We had to assess demand without being able to use prices or other market signals, since so many families had been priced out, so we decided to estimate demand based on the numbers and locations of children enrolled in public kindergarten programs. As the operation developed, we refined these initial estimates using census bureau data, commercial data, and a large-scale online and live outreach operation (see below). This information was then fed back to the team tracking demand. After year one, the team used actual enrollment data at the program level from the previous year to develop increasingly accurate demand estimates, allowing it to both refine projections and target outreach efforts.<sup>6</sup> Appendix A shows the outcome of one such mapping exercise.

### Procurement & contracting

The team was committed to a “mixed-delivery” public model—one in which the public sector would fund the system, set standards, and provide a range of supports to each site, but would deliver the program in both schools and private community-based organizations (CBOs) under contract with the city. NYC already had experience contracting with a network of experienced, quality Head Start and childcare providers in many of its neighborhoods to run

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<sup>6</sup> The team developed estimates for each elementary school zone. In NYC, these zones are a good proxy for walking distance. Most families strongly preferred a pre-K program within walking distance of home, work, or a relative’s house, and demand was strong enough to make such a dense network feasible and necessary.

existing programs, many of which had provided quality childcare for years or decades and were owned and controlled by women of color.<sup>7</sup> In the beginning of 2014, the city contracted with CBOs for 18,812 half-day pre-K seats, and 12,681 full-day pre-K seats ([Office of the Mayor et al. 2014](#), 4). But because CBOs were so space constrained, converting half-day classrooms to full-day classrooms entailed expansion into hundreds of new sites, and ultimately meant adding many new organizations to the program.

To meet this goal, NYC issued Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to identify providers to join the program and reviewed nearly 2,000 applications. To make sure the process was as equitable as possible, an Interagency Expansion team set up a separate outreach operation to let programs know about the opportunities and help them apply, using many of the same techniques as the family outreach operation ([New York City Department of Education 2017](#), 13). To maintain quality, each program submitted a written proposal and had an interview and/or site visit by a team of evaluators. Programs that did not meet the standards did not receive the contract, as evidenced by the fact that as of 2016, only 60 percent of the programs that applied were selected, a percentage in line with previous years.

In the end, Pre-K for All succeeded in building a mixed-delivery system: We offered 59 percent of its seats in CBOs ([New York City Department of Education 2017](#)).<sup>8</sup> We also decided to negotiate each CBO's contract rate separately to account for the differing staff experience levels and widely varying occupancy costs in NYC, requiring a separate team and new protocol, but helping to avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach that would unfairly exclude providers.

## Classrooms and buildings

A team from the agencies specializing in real estate acquisition and design and construction focused on creating spaces for tens of thousands of new students, including:

- Converting hundreds of classrooms in district schools for pre-K use (eventually serving 25,490 students in 2015-16);
- Helping CBOs lease and set up hundreds of new classrooms across hundreds of buildings (39,684 students); and

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<sup>7</sup> These programs were funded with a mix of federal funds, which came to NYC through the US Office of Head Start, the New York State Office of Children and Families, and city general funds.

<sup>8</sup> In order to ensure quality, we set up a separate team to run these procurements, which involved evaluation of written applications, interviews, and site visits to new sites from experienced early childhood educators.

- Buying or leasing new space that the city would own and operate to serve 3,473 children in 17 school districts in which school and CBO space was not available where it was needed in time to meet the demand for year two.

The team had to consider factors unique to the design of pre-K space, like bathrooms that could be used easily and safely by four-year-olds, entry and exit requirements, fire alarm systems, and access to outdoor play space—all challenging issues, especially in older buildings in redlined, marginalized neighborhoods where many CBOs already controlled or could acquire spaces. See Table 1, below, for a summary of the additions of programs and seats.

**Table 1. Changes in the Pre-K System from Fall 2013 to Fall 2015**

Setting	Seats		Action
	<i>Fall 2013</i>	<i>Fall 2015</i>	
District School Half-Day	7,552 <sup>c</sup>	0	Converted all half-day to full-day; located additional district school space.
District School Full-Day	16,119 <sup>b</sup>	25,490 <sup>a</sup>	
CBO Half-Day	31,493 <sup>c</sup>	4,650 <sup>d</sup>	Converted half-day to full-day and identified needed additional space; ran new Requests for Proposals and helped organizations identify, acquire, and fit out space.
CBO Full-Day	3,364 <sup>b</sup>	39,684 <sup>a</sup>	
Pre-K Center	0	3,473 <sup>a</sup>	Bought or leased space; constructed new classrooms
Charter School Pre-K	0	~400 <sup>d</sup>	Request for Proposals
<b>Total Half-Day</b>	<b>39,045</b>	<b>4,650</b>	
<b>Total Full-Day</b>	<b>19,483</b>	<b>69,047</b>	
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>560<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>1,850<sup>a</sup></b>	

Sources:

- [New York City Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education 2016](#), slides 6 and 8.
- [New York City Department of Education 2017](#), p. 12.
- [Office of the Mayor et al. 2014](#), p. 4. Programs contracted by the Administration for Children’s Services are counted as half-day because those programs required families to pass income and activity tests and pay fees in order to receive full-day service.
- Estimate based on DOE data ([New York City Department of Education 2016](#)).

A second team met to coordinate and sequence permitting of this new space. As an example of the intricate internal coordination required, in order for an early childhood space to receive a permit from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to operate, both the Department of Buildings and the fire department first needed to inspect and clear the space for use. To succeed, each agency needed to send personnel to hundreds of sites over a few short weeks in the proper sequence, then coordinate any repairs (often with a third-party landlord) and return, again in the proper sequence.

Table 2, below, summarizes the steps through which a typical CBO site would need to move to be approved, and gives a sense of the complexity and scale of the overall task. Successful implementation required coordination among over a dozen different agencies that did not typically work closely together and spanned diverse domains ([Crawford 2015](#)). Accomplishing it was a significant exercise in and demonstration of building state capacity successfully.

## Table 2. Steps to Add a New CBO to the Program

Steps	Approvals Needed
1. Write Request for Proposals (RFP)	
2. Issue RFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE Finance Department, Office of the Chief Financial Officer (DOE finance)</li> <li>• DOE Legal Services, Office of General Counsel (DOE legal)</li> <li>• DOE Office of Contract Services, Office of General Counsel (DOE contracts)</li> <li>• DOE leadership</li> <li>• Mayor's Office of Contract Services (for use of PASSPort)</li> </ul>
3. Outreach to CBOs	
4. Evaluate responses	
5. Make preliminary awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> <li>• DOE contracts</li> <li>• DOE legal</li> <li>• DOE leadership</li> <li>• Mayor's Office of Contract Services</li> </ul>
6. If vendor is new, complete vendor registration and background check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayor's Office of Contract Services</li> <li>• Department of Investigation</li> <li>• DOE Contracts</li> </ul>
7. Negotiate site budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> </ul>
8. Make final award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> <li>• Office of Management and Budget</li> <li>• DOE leadership</li> <li>• Panel for Education Policy</li> </ul>
9. Permitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Health and Mental Hygiene</li> <li>• Department of Buildings</li> <li>• NYC Fire Department</li> <li>• Department of Design and Construction</li> </ul>
10. Register contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYC Comptroller</li> </ul>
11. Teacher clearances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Teacher Recruitment &amp; Quality</li> <li>• Department of Health and Mental Hygiene</li> <li>• Department of Investigation</li> </ul>

\*Note: PASSPort is New York City's online system for managing procurement.

If a new CBO site is needed:

Additional Steps	Approvals Needed
1. Award construction funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> <li>• DOE legal</li> <li>• DOE leadership</li> <li>• Mayor’s Office of Contract Services (for use of PASSPort)</li> </ul>
2. Monitor construction progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Design and Construction (in coordination with Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Fire Department, and Department of Buildings)</li> </ul>
3. Issue Temporary Certificate of Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYC Fire Department</li> <li>• Department of Buildings</li> </ul>
4. Issue permit to operate a childcare facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Health and Mental Hygiene</li> </ul>
5. Negotiate site budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> </ul>
6. Make final award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOE finance</li> <li>• DOE contracts</li> <li>• Office of Management and Budget</li> <li>• DOE leadership</li> <li>• Panel for Education Policy</li> </ul>
7. Register contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYC Comptroller</li> </ul>
	After these steps and approvals, payment can begin.

*Thanks to Teija Sudol, current Senior Division Chief, Office of the New York City Comptroller, former Senior Executive Director, Program Planning and Development for the Division of Early Childhood at the NYC DOE for her review of this table.*

## ***Social Infrastructure Planning***

While the current industrial policy programs are focused on building new manufacturing plants and addressing similar physical infrastructure challenges, they are also working to ensure there is a well-trained workforce to fill all the new construction, manufacturing, and other jobs created. Similarly, the Pre-K for All team had to recruit the people and build the workforce systems that would ensure that pre-K was a quality developmental experience for

children. The following provides brief descriptions of the components of that social infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

## Teachers and support

In order to help schools and CBOs recruit the hundreds of new teachers needed, the DOE's central human resources team set up a unit dedicated to the purpose, serving both district schools and CBOs.<sup>10</sup> By running a public campaign, conducting hiring events, screening candidates, and working alongside graduate schools of education, the HR team was able to work with schools and CBOs to recruit enough teachers to launch. A separate team focused on moving hundreds of new teachers through safety clearance, which included fingerprinting and coordination with city, state, and federal investigative agencies.

## Continuous quality improvement

In its first years, Pre-K for All deployed five main strategies to assess and improve program quality:

1. **Quality standards:** The team worked with early childhood researchers, leaders from other districts, CBO leaders, and other experts to create research-based, streamlined quality standards that would apply to every setting.
2. **Consistent tools for measuring quality on a regular cycle:** The team created a separate unit to conduct nationally recognized assessments of all programs on a regular basis.<sup>11</sup>
3. **Expert support staff:** As part of the expansion, NYC hired a team of 100 instructional coaches and 150 social workers to provide on-the-job coaching to teachers and leaders.
4. **Tailored supports for educators:** A team of experienced educators created open-source teaching materials, which anyone could use or adapt; introduced research-based curricula; and created professional learning courses that programs enrolled in during the course of the year.
5. **Using data to target support:** The team used multiple sources of information to allocate coaching time and assign programs to professional learning sessions,

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<sup>9</sup> The space devoted to these components should not be interpreted as a reflection of their importance! The author is currently working with a set of communities to expand early childhood programs, and is developing other articles devoted to these components to be published in 2023 and 2024.

<sup>10</sup> All teachers in Pre-K for All needed to have a BA. To teach in a public school, they needed to be certified, and to teach in a CBO they needed to have a study plan to gain certification within a defined timeframe.

<sup>11</sup> Staff conducted both the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Revised (ECERS-R).



including program assessment scores, input from coaches and social workers, family survey data, and demographic data from the program. For example, a program with high numbers of referrals of Black boys to restrictive special education<sup>12</sup> would receive more support from a social worker and instructional coach, informed by concerns about exclusion expressed by families and the guidance of the coach working with site leadership.

These five strategies were implemented as part of a broader approach to continuous quality improvement: examining multiple types of information, predicting which interventions were likely to help improve the program, allocating resources accordingly, and then checking the information again—making adjustments both to the allocations and to the ways we decided on those allocations each year. Critically, we partnered with a team of early childhood researchers at the New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development who helped us design this approach based on the best practices and studies from the field.

## Data infrastructure

The Department of Education (DOE) had a limited data system prior to 2014: It lacked a central system to track CBO contracts, payments, and enrollment, and had no way to track coaching support or assessment results at scale. A new team worked with veteran IT administrators and outside consultants to build systems that could support all the activities above as well as the outreach and enrollment activities described below (see the later section on “Building Policy Feedback Loops”).<sup>13</sup>

## *Building Coordination Capacity*

To address the challenge of coordinating the physical and social infrastructure planning efforts across multiple city agencies, Mayor de Blasio created what he termed a “war room”: regular meetings of all the agencies responsible for key tasks, at which representatives tracked progress using jointly produced dashboards, which involved the rapid integration of several agencies’ data.

One dashboard tracked site readiness and permitting; another tracked the main outcomes of the outreach campaign. Deputy Mayor Richard R. Buery and other senior leaders presented one dashboard to the mayor each week with a summary of sites confirmed ready, children

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<sup>12</sup> This is a significant issue for the field. See, for example, [National Center for Learning Disabilities 2020](#).

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed description of this set of challenges, which drew on an entirely different set of personnel and expertise, see [Crawford 2015](#).

enrolled, teachers hired, and contracts signed, giving him the opportunity to make suggestions, give direction, offer support, or intervene directly. This sped decision-making, heightened accountability, and quickly focused resources and management attention on the highest-need areas.

## Early Results of Early Childhood Industrial Policy

The initial 20-month implementation<sup>14</sup> of Pre-K for All was successful based on the traditional terms of industrial policy in a few key respects:

### *Reach*

- The city met its goal of offering free, full-day pre-K to 53,000 children in September 2014 and then to all that applied—over 70,000—in September 2015. Though the city was not starting from scratch, 50,000 children who had previously not had any access, only had access to half-day pre-K, and/or had to pay a fee gained access to free, full-day pre-K ([Office of the Mayor et al. 2014](#), 4). Overall, the administration spent \$1 billion per year on the effort, including city, state, and federal funds.
- Based on enrollment data, the team succeeded in enrolling children at the same income levels as those attending kindergarten, including families who had previously been shut out of early care and education. The majority of children who enrolled were in families from the lowest income quartile, 63 percent of enrollment was in communities with income below the city median of ~\$52,000, and over 70 percent of children were in families from the lowest two income quartiles ([New York City Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education 2016](#), 5). In other words, even though this was a new, optional program, the team's outreach efforts ensured that low-income families were not left behind ([New York City Department of Education 2015](#)).

### *Quality*

- NYC did well and improved over time on measures of quality that many programs around the country use to gauge system performance, allaying fears that program quality would decline precipitously during a rapid expansion ([Shapiro 2019](#)).

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<sup>14</sup> These results focus on the initial implementation, both to demonstrate the ability to produce those results quickly (a key question in current debate over industrial policy implementation), and because the speed and continued expansion of the program in later years created more complex issues, discussed later in the paper.

## *Impact*

- The fact that not all students were able to attend Pre-K for All in 2014 gave us an opportunity to look at an early indicator of impact by comparing third grade standardized test scores of those who did attend with those who did not. We found that:
  - Third-grade students who attended Pre-K for All outperformed students who did not attend Pre-K for All.
  - The white-Black and white-Hispanic gaps were narrower for students who attended Pre-K for All compared to the gaps among students who did not attend Pre-K for All<sup>15</sup> ([Office of the Mayor of the City of New York 2019a](#)).
- Pre-K for All also made it more likely that a low-income child in NYC was enrolled in Medicaid and properly diagnosed with asthma or vision problems ([Hong, Dragan, and Glied 2019](#)).

## *Positive Policy Feedback*

- The program was popular. Ninety-two percent of surveyed parents rated the quality of their child's pre-K program as "good" or "excellent" and 83 percent of surveyed parents reported that Pre-K for All improved their child's learning and behavior "a lot" ([Westat, Metis Associates, and Branch Associates n.d.](#)).
- As the mayor headed into reelection, the successful rollout of Pre-K for All was still in voters' minds and cited as contributing to his comfortable lead in the polls ([Shapiro 2017](#)).

These outcomes point to the potential benefits of early childhood industrial policy when implemented at scale. The implementation had some serious flaws, which we will explore below, but, before examining those, we should use this case study to examine one of the main current debates in industrial policy by asking: Did democratic process as it existed in 2013-15 make the implementation of Pre-K for All more difficult to achieve?

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<sup>15</sup> The white-Black gap was 5.3 percentage points narrower in English/Language Arts (ELA) and 6.8 percentage points narrower in math for Pre-K for All students compared to the gap among students who did not attend Pre-K for All. The white-Hispanic gap was 6.0 percentage points narrower in ELA and 6.5 percentage points narrower in math for Pre-K for All students compared to the gap among students who did not attend Pre-K for All.

# Moments of Democratic Input and Control in Pre-K for All

Pre-K for All was implemented in the context of strong democratic processes and checks, with five key mechanisms for input and feedback, summarized below. This seldom looked like the kind of democratic planning one would see in the kinds of participatory budgeting exercises pioneered in hundreds of cities around the world in recent years ([New York City Council n.d.](#); [Romeo 2023](#)), where citizens gather over a period of time, deliberate over policy options, and ultimately reach consensus or vote for outcomes. Instead, these processes were a mix of electoral work, legislative debate, built feedback loops, and more inclusive planning work, especially as the initiative matured.

## 1. *Pre-K for All “on the Ballot”*

While the proposal to create Pre-K for All was never put to a direct referendum, Bill de Blasio made Pre-K for All—and a tax on those earning above \$500,000 to pay for it—the central policy proposal of his campaign for mayor of NYC in 2012-13, creating a public discussion of the policy and giving voters the chance to show support for it by voting for its champion.

Ursulina Ramirez, chief architect of the proposal, who went on to become COO of the public school system, recalls that the team settled on pre-K as the central proposal, over other compelling topics like affordable housing or a new vision for policing, because they perceived a “galvanizing moment” on the topic:

Whether you're upper middle class, you're middle class, or, obviously and especially, if you're low-income, the issue resonated across the board. Everybody agreed that we needed to address early childhood education. We hit the streets and people said, yes, this is what I need. Can it be done next year? (Ramirez 2023)

Although Jonathan Rosen did not believe that many voters made their decision in the 2013 five-way Democratic mayoral primary solely on the basis of pre-K, the approach did distinguish de Blasio and helped fix his identity as a candidate ready to tax the wealthy to increase the supply of an important social good.

The pre-K proposal gave a sense of the type of Democrat Bill de Blasio was in a multi-candidate field in a singular way: He ran on the idea that the government has the power to improve people's lives. And there's a lot of wealth and we can tax it and we can actually afford these things that people need. (Rosen 2023)

“Every speech and every single set of remarks on the campaign trail was focused around pre-K,” Ramirez (2023) recalls. Bill de Blasio garnered more than 40 percent of the vote in the primary, enabling him to avoid a run-off: a remarkable accomplishment in what had been a competitive five-person race.

## 2. *Pre-K for All in the Budget*

The public was engaged throughout the budget process in a number of ways. NYC does not have the power to raise income taxes; New York State had to pass legislation as part of the budget to allow the city to raise taxes on high-income earners to raise the estimated additional \$300 million in annual operating costs to make pre-K universal, and most legislation involving new revenue was passed as part of the budget. De Blasio took office on January 1; by law, the state budget had to be approved by April 1.

The administration launched a robust outside campaign to win approval for the tax increase, which included events, rallies, paid ads, and a team working systematically to persuade legislators. By February, Governor Andrew Cuomo had come out in opposition to the tax increase, but said he was in favor of the program and could find another, yet-to-be-specified way to pay for the expansion. This resulted in a public fight, which once again put the shape of “early childhood industrial policy” front and center in democratic discourse. A Quinnipiac poll at the time showed high awareness of the issue, with 86 percent of voters polled favoring universal pre-kindergarten, but a majority preferring Governor Cuomo’s proposal to fund it out of existing revenues (without specified balancing cuts) ([Quinnipiac University 2014](#)).

On April 1, New York State passed its budget. It included funds for the expansion, but not permission to increase taxes, leaving NYC without an ongoing revenue source for the program. The governor, the state Assembly, and the state Senate had looked hard at Pre-K for All and given NYC permission and resources to proceed, with a key caveat: Funding would be subject to their annual budget process.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the 51-member New York City Council had to approve the city’s budget and, by providing public oversight of the program, would play a critical role in shaping it. While their

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<sup>16</sup> The legislature publicly made a five-year funding commitment, but all appropriations must be approved each year, and sometimes public commitments change as circumstances do. The legislature had first committed to “Universal Pre-K” in 1998, and committed to funding it fully several times, only to pull back later in negotiations with the governor. Enrollment of four-year-olds stood at 44 percent in 2012 statewide, down from 47 percent in 2010, and state spending per child enrolled had also declined over time ([National Institute for Early Education Research n.d.](#)).

approval of the budget was not in serious question, their ongoing role and political influence meant that the implementation team briefed members consistently through the spring on progress and had to respond quickly to concerns. For example, the team added a large pre-K center late in the summer as construction was completed, and originally decided to make enrollment first come, first served. When a council member from a neighboring district correctly pointed out that this would disadvantage working families and families that spoke a language other than English, the issue quickly escalated and the team changed course the night before enrollment was supposed to open, jettisoning the first-come, first-served process in favor of a long open enrollment period with a lottery to determine entry.

Finally, the city comptroller, a citywide elected official, has to approve all contracts before the executive branch can make any payments on them. The comptroller has 30 days to review a contract, and their review is supposed to focus on the integrity of the procurement process. The new city comptroller, Scott Stringer, interpreted his mandate more expansively, however, claiming that his job was to act as an independent check on the executive and ensure that all the classrooms were healthy and safe. We worked behind the scenes to satisfy his concerns, but he made them public just days before school opening ([Lemire 2014](#); [Stewart 2014](#)), which we worried would undermine confidence in the program, dissuade hesitant families we had worked hard to enroll from showing up, and embolden the program's opponents.

The mayor's team held an event with the commissioners of all the health and safety agencies of the city and other elected officials, ensuring that every classroom was safe and ready ([Office of the Mayor of the City of New York 2014b](#)). We also delayed the opening of several programs in which recent walkthroughs had uncovered concerns. The comptroller acquiesced and began to review and approve contracts.

In sum, from 2012 to 2014, Pre-K for All faced several potential "veto points" that were part of New York's political process. In addition, the existing democratic processes provided significant avenues for input and constructive challenge to the initiative, and, through the ongoing influence of elected officials and the constituents that contacted their offices about the program, would continue to do so.

### ***3. Building Policy Feedback Loops: Pre-K for All Outreach and Enrollment***

The implementation team found ways to incorporate input and feedback from two other sets

of stakeholders into decisions about how to allocate close to 70,000 pre-K seats across almost 1,850<sup>17</sup> separate program sites and successfully enroll children in them.

**Families.** The team sought three vital types of input and information from families:

- How many wanted their child to attend pre-K, and where they lived, so the team could create enough programs in the correct areas of the city;
- Which messages were most likely to motivate families to enroll their children, especially families who had little interaction with and/or low trust in government; and
- Which program they wanted to attend. We decided to allow families to choose which program to attend rather than assigning them (see discussion below).

**Schools and CBOs.** The team similarly sought three types of input and information from program leaders and staff:

- Where the programs were and how many program seats they still had available or if they had a waitlist, in real time;
- Whether a site offered a unique program that families should know about. For example, some programs offered language support to families that spoke a language other than English at home; and
- Qualitative information about how families in each NYC community were responding to the outreach efforts and new programs. The team used this vital information both for real-time adjustments and future planning.

We built three systems to collect and synthesize vast amounts of quantitative and qualitative information to allocate resources, ranging from incremental contracted seats to scarce time from outreach teams to help recruit families. These systems were:

1. A 70-person outreach team, based loosely on facilitated enrollment operations created in some states during the implementation of the Affordable Care Act ([Hill, Wilkinson, and Courtot 2014](#));
2. A centralized enrollment system which allowed families to fill out a single application with a ranked list of program choices—including both school-based and community-based programs—and receive a “single best offer” to the highest ranked program on their list with an opening ([Tullis 2014](#)); and

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<sup>17</sup> The program grew from 1,100 to approximately 1,850 sites between year one and year two of implementation. Year two involved more site acquisition and construction because almost all existing capacity had essentially been used in year one.

3. Reports on each program, including family feedback to help inform decisions families made about which program would be the best fit for their children (see sample in Appendix B; see also [New York City Department of Education n.d.](#)).

The Pre-K for All outreach team played a central role in communicating with families and programs, aggregating the information, and working with the program team to make adjustments. Run by leaders with campaign experience and staffed largely by trained community organizers, the team saw themselves as part of a larger effort to make the program, and by extension the government, more responsive and accountable to families and programs.

In short order, the team worked with experts from throughout the administration and a set of outside consultants to:

- Run focus groups to determine the most effective messages to encourage families to apply;
- Mount a large paid and earned-media campaign across the city to encourage enrollment;
- Assemble a database of families with four-year-old children in NYC and call tens of thousands of families to inform them about the program and offer live help to find a program and enroll;
- Survey families about programs and make their feedback public so the next year's families could consult that information when finding a program for their children; and
- Develop tools to allow the team to see where there were areas of under-enrollment so they could target scarce outreach resources.

## The challenge of centralizing enrollment

The decision to centralize the family enrollment process and make participation in the central enrollment system mandatory for all schools and CBO programs was especially difficult, and highlights the challenges of democratic planning.

The program team saw centralizing the enrollment process as a way to give caregivers the widest possible variety of options when selecting a program that felt like the best fit for their child and believed this element of choice would encourage more families to enroll. By some measures, the system was successful: Over 80 percent of families got an offer to one of their top three choices, over 70 percent got their top choice ([New York City Department of Education 2017](#)), and families expressed strong satisfaction with the system.



Many CBOs had different views of the process, however. They had enrolled children independently for years, relying on local, word-of-mouth networks to fill their classrooms. Suddenly, they were forced to rely on a central system, and some felt as if they had been thrust into direct competition with each other and with district schools for the first time. Some did not trust the Department of Education to run the process fairly and transparently, and others simply wanted the flexibility to add families directly to their rosters without additional processes. Others liked the approach because their enrollment improved as families learned about them from the central system or an outreach team member.

The DOE struggled to reconcile these legitimate, but opposing, viewpoints. Would more input have produced a consensus? The debate continues as of this writing ([Day Care Council of New York 2023](#)).

#### ***4. Addressing Unequal Compensation: Labor and CBO Voice***

Our administration made a mistake in failing to address the fundamental issue of equity in compensation across district schools and CBOs as Pre-K for All implementation began. Fortunately, CBO providers, union leaders, and advocates pushed open another window of opportunity to address the issue five years later, and NYC moved forward after decades of inaction. This highlights an important example of significant democratic input and intervention into a government program that made the program better and fairer.<sup>18</sup>

##### **Inheriting an unequal system**

When we began planning for implementation in the winter of 2014, we faced a situation common to many mixed-delivery early childhood systems: Teachers and staff in CBOs made significantly less than their equally qualified, equally experienced peers in district schools. In some cases, the gap exceeded \$10,000 a year ([Parrott 2020](#), 9-10).

As is common in systems throughout the country, the disparity was just one feature of a split early childhood system. One system, which had been called “Pre-K” in NYC government, was run mostly within public schools, had minimal income-eligibility requirements, and exclusively served four-year-olds. The other system, known as the “EarlyLearn” system, was run by the city’s child welfare agency, served low-income children from birth to age five, included strict means-testing and work requirements, and contracted with community-based

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<sup>18</sup> I rely heavily on [Parrott 2020](#) for the details of this story, though I also participated directly in the negotiations.

organizations. The difference in pay between equally qualified teachers and staff reflected the differing racial and gender politics of the two systems: one associated with education, available to all (like public school), and staffed mostly by white women; the other associated with welfare and its racialized politics, available only to low-income families, and staffed mostly by women of color.

## Initial decisions: January 2014

The Pre-K Implementation Task Force, appointed by the mayor, briefly considered adding funds to the budget to equalize pay between equally qualified teachers across settings. Ultimately, we decided against it, both because we would have had to ask the state legislature for a larger tax increase than originally proposed and because it would have significantly increased salaries of a union workforce<sup>19</sup> before the administration began negotiations on its municipal labor contracts, all of which had expired under the previous administration. In hindsight, if we had taken the time to include more stakeholders in the decision at that moment and listened more carefully to others already at the table, I think we might have decided differently. We should have at least expressed a commitment to the goal of equity and laid out a timetable to get there—as other communities have done more recently (see Appendix C).

Instead, the administration added funds to CBO contracts to raise pay for certified teachers in CBOs with a bachelor's degree to \$44,000 (from \$36,542) and to raise pay for certified teachers with a master's degree to \$50,000 (from \$39,350), bringing them closer to the starting salaries of teachers in district schools ([Office of the Mayor of the City of New York 2014a](#)). In the push to expand quickly over the first two years, however, we did not set out clear guidance to use the funds or systems to track them—limiting the initiative's effectiveness.

Within the first year of expansion, CBOs began to lose talented, experienced teachers to district schools. This was compounded when the city negotiated a new contract with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), widening the disparity between equally qualified teachers in each setting. To address the issue, the DOE introduced a program in 2015 for recruitment and retention bonuses for certified teachers in CBOs. By offering \$2,500 for new

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<sup>19</sup> Some of the workers in CBOs were members of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 37 (DC37). There were two related objections within the administration. The first was the concern that increasing salaries of any union worker, even ones not technically city employees, would disrupt pattern bargaining at a delicate moment. The second was that the previous administration had taken the position that CBO salaries were a labor-management issue and therefore none of their concern, although everyone knew the city was the only funder of the contracts. Some administration members still had that point of view in 2014.

teachers and \$3,500 for returning teachers who were certified and remained on the job through February of the year the bonus was granted, we hoped to help close the pay gap and reduce the turnover at CBOs. Many CBOs continued to report the same challenges, however, and the fundamental inequity remained.

## Labor and provider voice: 2019

Several events came together to create a new opportunity for concerted advocacy on the issue:

- In 2017, the mayor decided to combine the two parts of the city's early childhood system at the Department of Education,<sup>20</sup> bringing new focus to the issue of compensation inequity among the system's stakeholders. They increased the intensity of their advocacy efforts.
- This coincided with annual budget negotiations between the New York City Council and the mayor. Advocates and providers used this moment to make compensation equity a central demand of the City Council in those negotiations.
- The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 37 (DC37), the main union for municipal workers and one of the most powerful unions in the city, merged with the smaller AFSCME union that had represented Head Start and childcare workers previously. This brought significant additional political strength to the coalition.

Advocates, providers, and labor leaders identified the conjuncture of these three events as the time for action, and pushed the issue to the top of the agenda at the right moment. As part of their strategy, the coalition called for a one-day strike on May 2 to protest compensation inequity, bringing focus to the campaign at the height of budget negotiations.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> There were some exceptions. The Early Intervention program, which serves children with delays and disabilities from birth to age two, remained at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). The programs that issue vouchers to subsidize childcare for families on public assistance and in temporary housing and for families involved in the child welfare system remained at the child welfare agency. Licensing and health and safety inspections remained at DOHMH. But all the contracts for childcare in CBOs; family childcare homes; and schools funded with childcare (TANF), education, and Head Start funds moved to DOE.

<sup>21</sup> Bill de Blasio was also actively campaigning for the Democratic nomination for president of the United States at the time. Since his implementation of Pre-K for All was recognized as one of his key accomplishments as mayor and formed part of his "stump speech" during the campaign, advocates calculated that he and his political team would want to avoid negative press coverage regarding the initiative, adding to their leverage.

## Progress: a step toward equality

On July 19, 2019 the administration, City Council, and union announced an agreement to boost pay for certified teachers in CBOs by 30 to 40 percent by October 1, 2021—raising the starting salary to \$68,652 and bringing salaries in line with the first-year salary for teachers in district schools. Later that year, the administration announced that it would extend the new salary scale to all programs in CBOs, regardless of whether the program was unionized. Non-certified teachers and other staff also received increases and/or bonuses. At long last, this significantly addressed the structural inequity in NYC's early childhood education system ([Office of the Mayor of the City of New York 2019b](#); [Parrott 2020](#), 1, figures 1 and 2).

As part of the same set of discussions, the city agreed to a set of reforms to the contracts with providers, guaranteeing 75 percent payment regardless of enrollment (reassuring some providers still skeptical about the city's enrollment system) and making it easier for organizations to adjust their contracts as the cost of real estate or salaries increased ([Office of the Mayor of the City of New York 2019c](#)).

Even with this progress, inequities remained, and the union and providers continue to work on them as of this writing. The current collective bargaining agreements for the childcare and Head Start unions (Locals 205 and 95, respectively), now integrated within DC37, expired in 2022.<sup>22</sup>

## Progress on compensation as an example of democratic input

Although the process was not always deliberative, or even planned at all, the process of addressing compensation incorporated many institutions and processes of democratic and collective power. The program would have been better faster if compensation equity had been addressed in the beginning, but democratic institutions acted as valuable checks that moved the program forward.

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<sup>22</sup> CBO teachers still do not get the same longevity increases as district school teachers—and their health-care and pension benefits are not equivalent. Furthermore, many CBO teachers work longer hours and more weeks per year, but receive the same base salary. Other staff also still lag behind their counterparts in the school system.

## 5. *Provider and Family Councils as Power-Sharing Structures*

In 2018, as the administration consolidated more of the city's birth-to-five early care and education programs at the DOE, we began to experiment with models of more inclusive democratic planning to address ways in which we believed the program was falling short of its equity goals. We also reflected on the limited nature of much of the feedback and input we were getting from families and providers.<sup>23</sup> Some members of our team wanted to push beyond existing democratic structures in an effort to share power with stakeholders.

We took on two reforms in an attempt to adopt this approach:

- We established a governing group of community-based early childhood leaders, called the CBO Council, and worked more closely with an existing group, the Day Care Council, to make decisions jointly about expansion plans, quality improvement strategies, and investments in workforce development.
- We also set up a Policy Council, which aimed to do the same with families of children in Head Start programs.

### Provider councils

Early childhood division leadership assigned a team to recruit, organize, and staff a council that would meet directly with leadership and share in decision-making. Staff had some hypotheses about the issues that would be highest priority for the council, but decided to start with recruitment and ask the group to form the agenda.

A team of trained staff visited CBO leaders around the city at a set of roundtables to hear concerns and recruit potential council members. A core group, intentionally designed to represent major areas of the city, formed out of that set of meetings and began to meet regularly with one another and with division leadership. At the same time, we reached out

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<sup>23</sup> K. Sabeel Rahman and Jocelyn Simonson lay out a “three-dimensional” approach for analyzing the level of community control of a project: the nature of authority (whether a group has real power over, or merely input into, the issues to be decided), the composition of the group (whether those not typically “at the table” are represented and able to act independently), and the moment of authority (whether the decision-making occurs upstream, affecting a wide distribution of resources, or downstream, focusing on a smaller range of decisions) ([Rahman and Simonson 2020](#), 105). In their terms, day-to-day family and provider authority was mostly non-binding input, the composition of the groups consisted of well-known advocate and provider leaders, and the moment of authority was downstream over a small range of issues.

and met frequently with the existing Day Care Council, which had recently come under new leadership.

Both groups focused on a range of issues that they had covered in previous forums, such as problems with centralized enrollment, late or incorrect payments, and the ongoing issue of compensation equity. As the discussions continued, they began to change in tone. As Wanda Carter, Chief Operating Officer for Highbridge Advisory Council Family Services put it, in prior meetings, “in my opinion we were always talked at and we weren’t talked with and we weren’t considered. And with the CBO Council, it was about our feedback and finally, someone looked at us like, okay, you guys are the experts, you’ve been doing this for a long time, what are your feelings about it?” (Carter et al. 2023).<sup>24</sup>

That said, progress on the original core issues was halting and limited. Many of the core issues still concern CBO leaders in the sector today. Looking back on the experience, Jose Velilla, Executive Director at Bloomingdale Family Program reflected:

All the issues still remain—enrollment and fiscal and the contracts, all of that. But I think . . . the one thing that I saw that was a positive growth that moved somewhat was the increase in communication and the increase in partnership, in that sense. It was that opportunity to feel like you are part of a team, or you are having some kind of impact at a very high level. (Carter et al. 2023)

As the pandemic hit NYC, the councils worked with leadership on policies related to staffing, the distribution of personal protective equipment, and remote learning. The most important decision on which the councils had significant impact was the administration’s decision to honor the new contract, which guaranteed a base payment of 75 percent of the contract amount regardless of enrollment, even during the pandemic when enrollment plummeted, the city faced a fiscal crisis, and many other city contracts were suspended or cut.

## Policy Council

When Pre-K for All merged with the city’s Head Start program in 2019, it inherited a long tradition of community control in early care and education. The Head Start Act was part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” which, in its enabling legislation, called for the “maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served” in the development, implementation, and administration of programs ([508 Public Law 88-452, 202\(a\)\(3\), 1964](#); [Melish 2010](#)).

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<sup>24</sup> All quotations from CBO Council members and Mary Gamory are from this interview.

In keeping with that approach, every Head Start program must have a Policy Council—an elected group of family representatives that “help lead and make decisions about their program” ([Office of Head Start 2021](#)). At DOE, this meant a group of family members had to review and approve all significant program decisions, including the budget, as equal partners.

The leadership model faced an immediate challenge when NYC’s direct Head Start grant was cut. Head Start typically makes grants directly to local providers; in some cases, it also grants funds to large cities such as New York that would in turn contract with community-based providers, enabling them to integrate Head Start into larger early childhood systems and support the programs effectively. The Office of Head Start put the city’s grant up for competition and the city fared poorly, losing over half its funds to other CBOs in the city.

The city had just a few months to adjust and communicate these significant changes to providers and families, and make high-stakes decisions about how to allocate the remaining funds. Under this intense pressure, the Policy Council worked together closely with staff to analyze and review data, and to allocate funds to the neighborhoods with highest concentrations of poverty not served by other Head Start programs.

Division leadership hoped to learn from the model, and slowly grow it to include all the programs in the division, so that all programs could benefit from family leadership, and family leaders could go on to become leaders in the K-12 system throughout the city.

## Challenges to Democratic Planning

While the Pre-K for All initiative successfully incorporated elements of democratic planning, the implementation team also struggled with trade-offs and tensions that are relevant to more general discussions of industrial policy implementation.

### *Time Pressure*

The rapid implementation timeline locked the team into a set of tight deadlines, which limited the opportunity for input and participation on some of the details of program planning, especially in the beginning of program implementation. This highlights a tension that programs may face between external deadlines and democratic process.

## *Windows of Opportunity*

Mayor de Blasio set such a rapid implementation timeline because he knew that there was only a small window of opportunity to establish the program. In an era of polarized politics and narrowly divided legislatures, early childhood industrial policymakers will often face short periods of time with narrow legislative majorities, where quick implementation may play a decisive role in building momentum for further progress. Elections are key moments of democratic input, and they have consequences; some members of the administration feared that failure to execute this key promise would jeopardize de Blasio's ability to be reelected and continue reform. This dynamic creates another tension with the kind of deliberative, participatory decision-making in some model processes.

## *Government Structures and Mandates*

People who want to participate in planning an initiative may want to help determine project budgets or specific staffing patterns, but rules governing procurement, budgeting, and hiring are seldom under any one team's control. By structuring and timing planning processes carefully, government teams can find avenues for participatory planning in these areas, but they will be limited and often in tension with these other processes.

## *“Capital P” Politics*

Politically powerful actors sometimes unexpectedly weigh in on carefully planned participatory processes, creating challenges for everyone taking part. Program teams will need to weigh interests as well as questions of what constitutes “legitimate” input into a planning process, and think about ways to build the power and relationships of the planning group with other actors to avoid, or neutralize, those conflicts.

## *Staff Resistance*

Democratic planning is new to many parts of government. Staff may find the process disconcerting, or even threatening. Mary Gamory, the lead staff person working with the CBO Council, recalled working with some staff within the early childhood division of the Department of Education who resisted the changes:

There were folks whose vision of incorporating was to listen and say, ‘Thanks for sharing your feedback.’ This was going to be a much more structured format, real shared governance. We're not making decisions anymore just on our own. We're going



to have folks who make those decisions with us and help us make the best decision possible. So I think that's where we got the most pushback. (Carter et al. 2023)

This was especially difficult given that many staff themselves had worked their way into positions of authority despite marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion. As Gamory continued:

I think it also brings up some personal issues for people as well . . . senses that 'I have not had my voice heard' and 'The system has not worked for me.' And I don't think they realize it until you explicitly call it out and say it's not going to change until we all make the effort to change it, you know, and saying that whether it's worked this way or didn't work for you—that's not enough anymore.

Creating a process in which staff understand and feel that sharing power may decrease individual power but increase *overall* power significantly is as challenging as it is essential.

## Imagining Better Outcomes from More Democratic Planning

While on many measures Pre-K for All was an example of successful early childhood industrial policy, there were several important ways in which the implementation failed to remedy longstanding inequities. First and foremost was the issue of compensation equity described above, but there were three other critical ones. One can imagine that with more robust structures in place for power-sharing and inclusive planning from the beginning, these issues would have been addressed more quickly. For example:

### 1. *Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*

When Pre-K for All expansion began, we did not invest enough management attention or resources into improving and expanding services for children with delays and disabilities. This was a mistake.<sup>25</sup> One of the greatest opportunities of early childhood industrial policy is to partner with families with children with delays and disabilities from the beginning, earning their trust and helping them navigate to the settings and services that will best serve

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<sup>25</sup> In fairness to the team, this preschool special education program was managed by the state, which also provided the majority of the funding. Still, we could have—and I think should have—advocated for more resources and control earlier, and/or advocated to build parallel structures in the city. This may not have been successful, but we should have tried.

their child. This not only addresses the longstanding inequities in failing to serve children with disabilities but also the ways in which racialization has magnified these inequities ([Children's Equity Project and Bipartisan Policy Center 2020](#)). At the same time, all teachers and leaders should be prepared and supported to serve children with a range of abilities to foster diverse learning communities that benefit all kids.

The team began to work on this in earnest in 2017, creating the city's first independently run and managed preschool special education programs, piloting new models of integrated pre-K for three- and four-year-olds, and ultimately funding salary increases for teachers in the state-city programs that served preschool children with disabilities. But the program would have had a greater impact if those moves had been made sooner, and one can imagine a group of families and advocates succeeding in pushing the city to do that if we had shared more power over planning earlier.

## 2. *Family Childcare/Care for Infants and Toddlers*

As discussed above, the administration made an early commitment to deliver Pre-K for All in both district schools and community-based settings. The team did not include “family childcare” settings—small programs serving up to six children out of a licensed provider’s home.<sup>26</sup>

As was the case in several other cities that implemented Pre-K quickly, the exclusion of family childcare had the unintended consequence of hurting business for many providers and likely putting many out of business completely. This effectively raised the cost of care for infants and toddlers, since family care is the largest source of care for this group in New York City. This hurt the livelihoods of many entrepreneurs, mostly women of color, who had built up businesses and relied on them to support their own families ([Hurley 2019](#)).

The administration changed course in 2018 by allowing family childcare providers to offer 3-K in their homes, creating staffed networks to provide administrative support and professional learning and adding a central team to support them, creating new instructional materials, and adding those providers to the centralized enrollment system so families could list them on their applications alongside community-based centers and schools. But the new system was introduced years too late, in the fall of 2019 just before COVID-19 swept across the city. Again, with a different, more inclusive planning process, the team may have understood

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<sup>26</sup> This was somewhat complicated by the fact that New York State regulates, largely funds, and sets payment rates for these providers. In addition, the conditions of the state grant for pre-K would not have allowed the city to seek reimbursement for four-year-olds served in those settings. As above, however, we did not push for changes to that language, and should have.

sooner that it was critical to include family childcare homes in the implementation of Pre-K for All, as other cities have done since ([Weisenfeld and Frede 2021](#)), to ensure that at the very least, the rollout of pre-K did not harm these vital providers of care.

A related, but distinct issue was the administration's overall lack of investment in care for infants and toddlers. Perhaps democratic planning and City Council support could have spurred us to make targeted investments in neighborhoods with the highest need for infant and toddler care, even as we implemented Pre-K for All. On the other hand, without the ability to raise revenue and/or the cooperation of other levels of government, we had limited options. I still believe it was important and correct to introduce a universal early education program, rather than a targeted one that included more ages. In any case, communities should plan birth-to-five systems holistically, and many are doing so (see Appendix C).

### 3. *Racial Equity and Quality*

Although quality remained high overall and continued to improve across many dimensions as the Pre-K for All program matured and expanded, gaps in certain measures of quality emerged between programs predominantly serving white and Black children<sup>27</sup> ([Latham, Corcoran, and Jennings 2021](#)), and progress in overall quality improvement on some measures stalled.

The team had a number of hypotheses for the trend, ranging from racial bias in measurement, to the significant impact of teacher turnover at CBO sites prior to the progress on compensation, to the limited ability of any program to completely mitigate the effects of hyper-segregated housing and racialized poverty. Some team members voiced long-standing but previously unarticulated questions about whether the national instruments captured what was most important about early childhood ([Policy Equity Group 2022](#)). We debated these even as we struggled to help providers and families manage through the pandemic and reckon with the outpouring of support for and reaction to Black Lives Matter demonstrations in NYC.

At the same time, other groups ([New York City Coalition for Educational Justice 2019](#)) voiced concerns about the cultural responsiveness of the instructional materials the Department of Education provided to programs, and the lack of representation of diverse authors of the books and materials on the lists that the team recommended to programs. Some staff saw a

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<sup>27</sup> Specifically, researchers found growing gaps in CLASS instructional support scores, measured by trained, validated classroom observers. There is conflicting evidence about the importance of this measure (see [Burchinal et al. 2010](#) and [Guerrero-Rosada et al. 2021](#)). Still, any trend emerging along racial lines concerned the team deeply and was a major topic of discussion and planning in 2020-21.

connection between this issue and the results we saw on some measures of quality. Over the course of the following year, a representative group of advocates, experts, and staff worked together to revise the materials and recommendations.

If the implementation team had had a broader, more inclusive planning structure in place, we may have had more information earlier about these issues, and stronger partnerships with which to chart a path forward.

## Conclusion

New York City demonstrated the power and potential of early childhood industrial policy by translating an electoral policy mandate into a high-quality universal pre-kindergarten program that changed the day-to-day lives of tens of thousands of children and families in under two years, creating significant benefits for New Yorkers, inspiring others to pursue the same goal, and creating a rationale for more government and collective action.

Drawing on expertise and capacity from throughout city government and collaborating in ways often invisible to the public, the team not only navigated complex bureaucratic processes and stakeholder demands in record time but made use of them. The early processes and scrutiny worked to ensure that the hundreds of new sites were safe, high-quality, and ready to serve students and families well. Later, approval processes with elected and appointed groups, such as the budget process, and paths for influence and pressure created and maintained by labor unions, social service groups, and advocates, helped advance key reforms such as progress on pay equity.

That said, with a more democratic, inclusive planning process, we might have made an even better program—one that was more inclusive of young children with disabilities from the start, one that compensated its staff fairly sooner or from the beginning, one that ensured that infant and toddler care was stable and family childcare providers were included, and one that focused even more sharply on ensuring the program targeted resources to children living in NYC's communities of color as part of a larger effort to create an anti-racist, just, and free city. Questions about how this could have been accomplished in the context of fast, large-scale implementation are vital, and those studying them should look to examples like this one in a wide variety of policy areas when deciding on policies and designing processes.

In the end, the fundamental issue with early childhood policy, as with all industrial policy, is mustering the political will to make and sustain critical investments—in this case, the ones we need to sustain and care for ourselves and our children. Processes and institutions are

essential, but this topic begins and ends, as it did in NYC, with the political struggle to put more of the resources we need under democratic control.

# Appendix A: Mapping Supply and Demand

The implementation team used the map below during the enrollment period in 2015 to make last-minute adjustments to seats and to target outreach to families. The team that created the map was led by Lucas Koehler and Adrien Siegfried, who at the time were executive director and deputy executive director of data and analytics for the division, respectively. Each area is an elementary school zone.

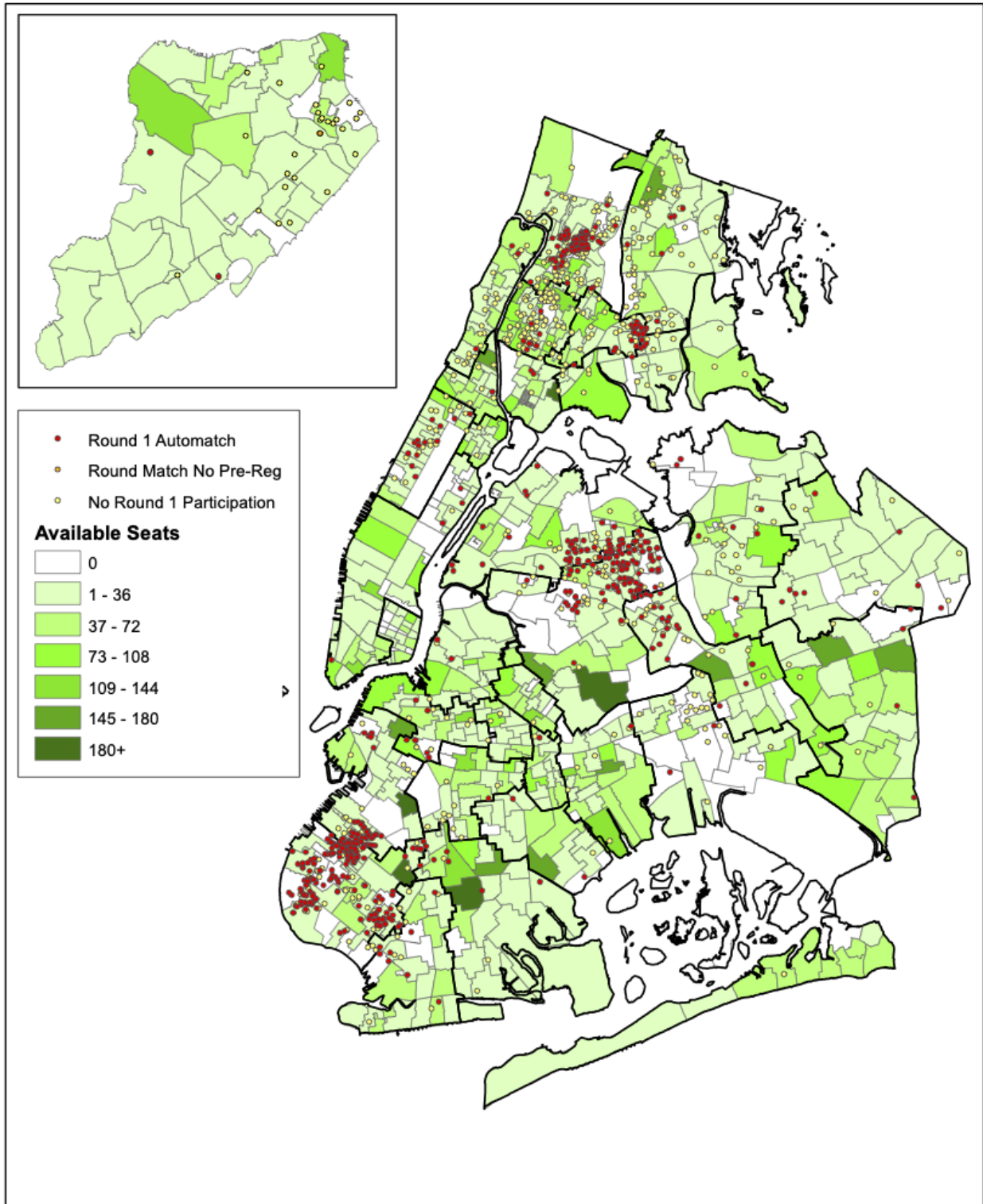
In the early years of the program, there were two “rounds” of Pre-K enrollment; families who were dissatisfied with the outcome of the process in round one could participate in round two, and families who had arrived in New York City after round one or had missed round one for some other reason could also participate. The red dots represent families who participated in round one but did not “match” to a program they selected on their application and were therefore offered a seat, or “automatched” to a seat, in a program they did not choose. Orange dots represent families who were offered one of their selected programs but had not enrolled, and white dots represented families who had not participated in round one.

Having this information enabled the outreach team to understand which areas of the city had clusters of families who were facing challenges, allowing them to zero in for further analysis and action.

The main source for this information was the Department’s School Enrollment Management System (SEMS). The green shading indicating the number of available seats in each zone came from our Site Vendor database, which had seat numbers, and from SEMS, which included current information about which seats had been offered to families. “Available seats” was a calculation of how many seats weren’t offered through the first round match. The team geocoded families using the [Geographic Online Address Translator](#), and created the maps using ArcGIS.

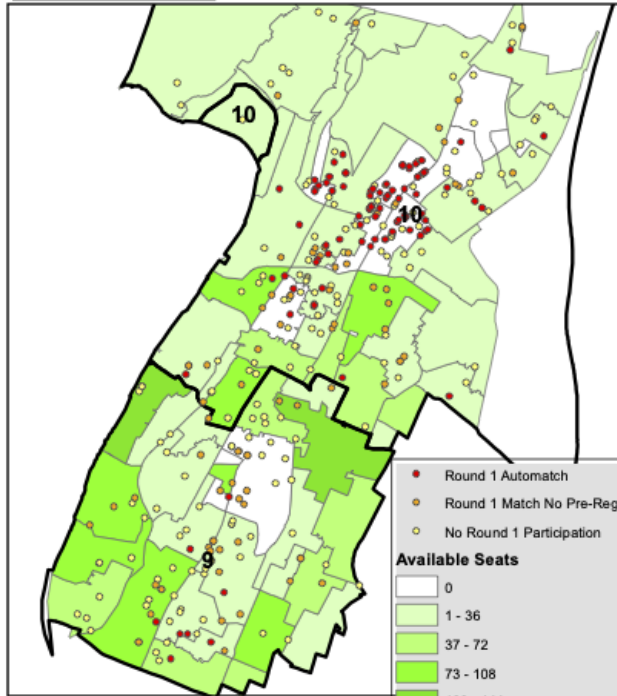
# “Concentrations of Families Experiencing Unfavorable Pre-K Enrollment Process Outcomes” aka “The Pre-K for All Unhappiness Maps”

## Round 2 Unmatched Families - City Wide Map (ES Zone)

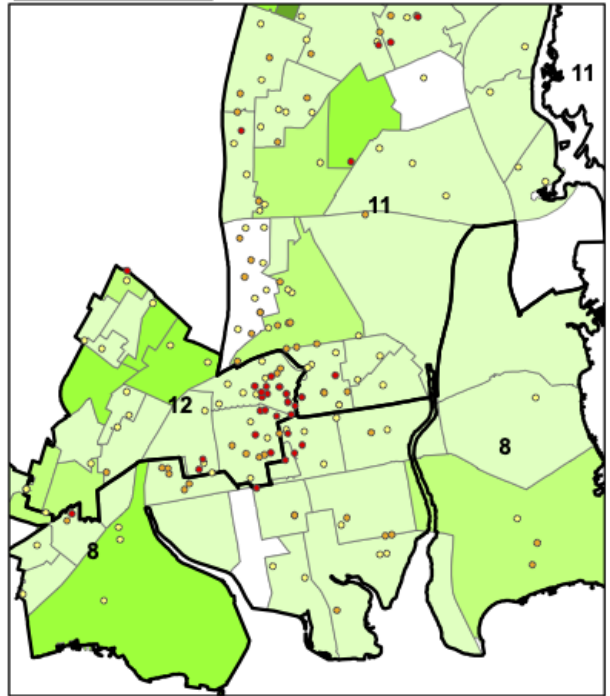


# Round 2 Unmatched Families - City Wide Map (ES Zone)

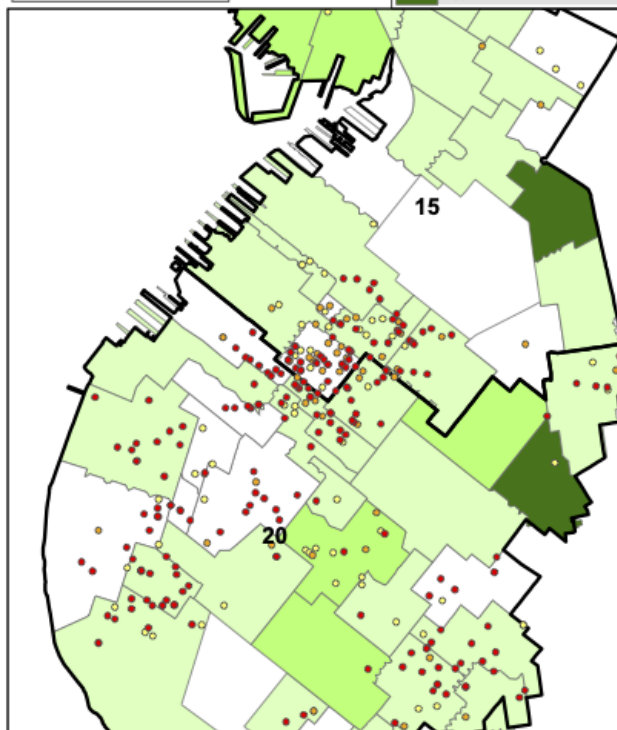
District 9 and 10



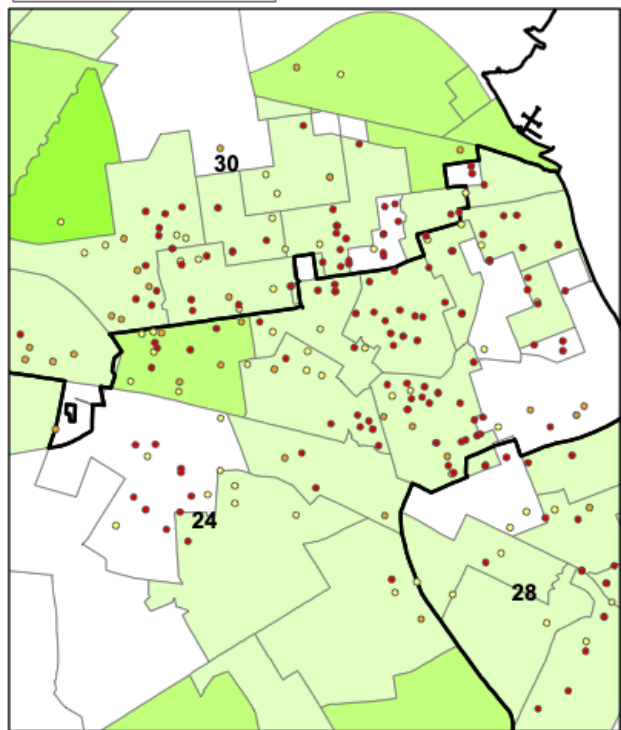
District 8, 11, 12



District 15 and 20



District 24, 28, and 30





# Appendix B: Pre-K for All Quality Snapshot

## Sample Snapshot for District-Operated Pre-K Program

### 2015-16 Pre-K Quality Snapshot



#### Pre-K Program - District

##### Framework for Great Schools

Research shows that schools strong in the six areas are far more likely to improve student achievement. Pages 2 and 3 of this report provide information on this program in those six areas.



##### Rating Key:

Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

##### General Information

School Leader:  
Enrollment (15-16):  
Type of Program: District School  
Daily Start Time:  
Length of Pre-K Day:  
Early Drop Off Available:  
Late Pick Up Available:



Address  
Phone Number

##### Program Features

Meals:  
Playspace:  
Other Programs:

Website:

##### NYC School Survey of Pre-K Families

Last school year, [this number of] pre-K families (%) answered the NYC School Survey questions about the program.

- % of pre-K families responded positively to questions about this program (City: %)
- % of families feel that teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children (City: %)

##### Interactions in the classroom

###### CLASS Assessment (program reviewed on [this date])

The CLASS scores look at interactions that support children's learning. This includes interactions between teachers and children, and among children.

Emotional Support (respect and kindness among teachers and children, and responsiveness to children)

This Program:

District:

Classroom Organization (management of time, behavior, and child involvement)

This Program:

District:

Instructional Support (support of children's language and thinking skills)

This Program:

District:

\*The district comparisons in this report include all pre-K programs in the district.

##### Program environment that helps children learn

###### ECERS-R Assessment (program reviewed on [this date])

The ECERS-R score looks at the learning environment, materials, and how teachers support and interact with children.

ECERS-R Total Score

This Program:

District:

## Sample Snapshot for NYCEEC Pre-K Program

### 2015-16 Pre-K Quality Snapshot



#### Pre-K Program - NYCEEC

##### Framework for Great Schools

Research shows that schools strong in the six areas are far more likely to improve student achievement. Pages 2 and 3 of this report provide information on this program in those six areas.



##### Rating Key:

Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

##### General Information

School Leader:  
Enrollment (15-16):  
Type of Program: NYC Early Ed Center (NYCEEC)  
Daily Start Time:  
Length of Pre-K Day:  
Early Drop Off Available:  
Late Pick Up Available:  
*May have income or other eligibility requirements. Contact for more information.*



Address  
Phone number

##### Program Features

Meals:  
Playspace:  
Other Programs:

Website:

##### NYC School Survey of Pre-K Families

Last school year, [this number of] pre-K families (%) answered the NYC School Survey questions about the program.

- % of pre-K families responded positively to questions about this program (City: %)
- % of families feel that teachers and parents think of each other as partners in educating children (City: %)

##### Interactions in the classroom

###### CLASS Assessment (program reviewed on [this date])

The CLASS scores look at interactions that support children's learning. This includes interactions between teachers and children, and among children.

Emotional Support (respect and kindness among teachers and children, and responsiveness to children)

This Program:

District:

Classroom Organization (management of time, behavior, and child involvement)

This Program:

District:

Instructional Support (support of children's language and thinking skills)

This Program:

District:

\*The district comparisons in this report include all pre-K programs in the district.

##### Program environment that helps children learn

###### ECERS-R Assessment (program reviewed on [this date])

The ECERS-R score looks at the learning environment, materials, and how teachers support and interact with children.

ECERS-R Total Score

This Program:

District:

Source: [New York City Department of Education 2017](#), p. 50.

# Appendix C: New Horizons in Early Childhood Industrial Policy

Many of the cities and counties working on early childhood industrial policy today have incorporated democratic planning processes that may enable them to deliver at scale for families and to deliver on many of the policies' promises while doing more to address underlying structural inequities more quickly.

There are three especially promising examples.

## *New Mexico:*

After more than a decade-long organizing effort led by advocates, providers, and family and community groups, in 2022, 70 percent of voters in New Mexico passed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to early childhood education and devoting about \$150 million annually in fees that the state earns from oil and gas development to early care and education ([Covert and Swartz 2022](#)).

While that amount of money is not enough to fund the system completely, the full set of stakeholders is engaged in the conversation about how the money will be spent. Compensation, the stability of family childcare, the importance of the full birth-to-five system, and other critical issues are now front and center, as the legislature and administrators are engaged in program design.

## *Multnomah County, OR:<sup>28</sup>*

Multnomah County, which includes the City of Portland, passed a revenue-raising measure after almost a decade of work; in this case, the county succeeded in passing a marginal tiered income tax, with no sunset, on high-income earners who live and work in the county—with 64 percent of the vote. And once again, the group organizing for the policy has placed some of the critical issues discussed above at the forefront, including contracting for 24 of 47 program locations in family childcare homes, providing targeted funds to stabilize infant/toddler care, training staff in culturally responsive and sustaining education, providing priority access for and outreach to the most disadvantaged families, and raising wages for educators as it sets out a stated path to achieving parity with kindergarten

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<sup>28</sup> All material here is from a live interview and presentation from Brooke Chilton-Timmons, an administrator of Multnomah's Preschool for All Program (Chilton-Timmons 2023).

teachers.

The initiative grew out of a model of inclusive policymaking. A task force of 100 diverse leaders representing various sectors of the economy, geographies, racial identities, and linguistic communities came together as the central policymaking body. They empowered four technical task forces to make recommendations, but all recommendations were reviewed, revised, and voted on by the full task force and an advisory board of parents. The full process took nine months, and then the group issued 50 public recommendations, which were refined for an additional year before the initiative went on the ballot.

This process has contributed to a longer implementation timeline. Planning for the ballot initiative began in 2018, the vote occurred in 2020, and the first 718 seats came online in the fall of 2022. The full implementation of 11,000-12,000 seats is scheduled for 2030. But this was the outcome of a community-led process, and the groups involved are convinced that the time it is taking will be well worth it because they will build the program in a just and sustainable way.

## *Detroit, MI:<sup>29</sup>*

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Kresge Foundation partnered with local leaders to start Hope Starts Here in 2016 in an effort to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive early childhood development system in Detroit. As in Multnomah, the strategy was to engage a comprehensive set of stakeholders early and design a system that truly responds to community needs.

To give a sense of the scope of the process, they involved 240 stakeholders, including more than 80 families, in monthly sessions over the course of a year to develop the framework. This included intensive engagement during which 144 community members and organizations conducted 125 separate community conversations involving 18,000 people in 45 days.

Aggregating all this feedback, Hope Starts Here released a plan of six overall imperatives, with 15 strategies and 26 policy recommendations underlying them, each with specific deliverables and timelines, with complete implementation scheduled by 2027 (See Appendix D). Crucially, the implementation is syndicated through the various Hope Starts Here partners in a distributive leadership model. For example, the United Way of Southeast Michigan leads the work of Imperative 5, which involves the creation of an integrated data system for early childhood services, along with a number of other community partners.

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<sup>29</sup> All material here is from a live interview and presentation from leadership of Hope Starts Here (Smith, Morgan, and White 2023).

In addition, more than 181 community organizations, community members, parents, and caregivers developed an organization called Detroit Champions for HOPE in 2019 to lead Imperative 2. The organization is staffed by parents and caregivers who have compensated roles of community outreach specialist and community outreach coordinator to reach the hardest-to-reach families in Detroit and surface early childhood issues and work on strategies to address them in the city council district where they live.

Throughout the pandemic, the comprehensiveness of the Hope Starts Here framework was well-positioned to advance early childhood priorities both in Detroit and at the state level. A multitude of COVID-related resources were accessed by organizations, childcare programs, families, and the early childhood system partners due to the connectedness of partners working together since 2016 to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

As Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer advances her proposal for universal pre-kindergarten through the state legislature, her administration may feel some of the same pressure NYC felt to deliver for families quickly to defend the expenditure. Ideally, those new state resources can be used in part to implement the vision of the Hope Starts Here stakeholders, and they can avoid the tension between fast implementation and democratic planning.

## ***Resolving Tensions in the New Early Childhood Industrial Policy***

The initiatives described above are relatively small and/or new, and do not face the political or competitive pressure that the CHIPS and Science Act faces, let alone the urgency of addressing the climate crisis. They are being implemented more slowly, delaying the positive benefits of the policies. That said, they are addressing problems now that the NYC team had to double back and solve later, often after significant negative unintended consequences that took up time and energy.

Each field and context will arrive at different answers, but these examples point to three productive questions:

1. In a given field of industrial policy, what planning can be done now, with maximum feasible participation, to get ready when the opportunity for rapid implementation arrives? Who can fund this work, which can take significant time and resources to do well?
2. What processes are most useful to guide diverse groups of people, with differing levels

of knowledge, through difficult resource allocation decisions on tight timelines? Again, looking across different fields of policy can be useful: For example, the land-use review process in New York City involves a range of stakeholders, multiple opportunities for presentation from technical experts, discussion, feedback, and advisory and binding votes, all on a strict seven-month timeline. The NYC Department of Education adapted it to create the community process that led to a significant school integration project in NYC—the removal of screened admissions in a large school district in Brooklyn—within a year. Similar adaptive design work may help groups make decisions faster without losing legitimacy.

3. When there is real pressure to act quickly, how can we elicit feedback in ways that match the pace? We have many more tools to do this even than in 2014, and more people have access to the technology that enables it. But soliciting honest, useful responses requires a base of trusting relationships that have been built up over time.

# Appendix D: Detroit's Hope Starts Here, Strategic Imperatives

**6 IMPERATIVES:**  
what we must do to make Detroit a city that puts our young children and families first

**15 STRATEGIES:**  
recommended actions to achieve our vision by 2027



Source: [https://hopestartsheredetroit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HSH-Full-Framework\\_2017\\_web.pdf](https://hopestartsheredetroit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/HSH-Full-Framework_2017_web.pdf)

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