



cityhealth

AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

NIEER

Taking Stock of City Pre-K Quality Policy and Practice

A Framework



The Framework for Taking Stock of City Pre-K Quality Policy and Practice is a public access document. Permission is granted for unlimited reproduction and for modification by local teams. If you make modifications, please include an appropriate citation for the original and clearly identify modifications as such.

SUGGESTED CITATION: Frede, E., Brooks, J.L., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Bryant, C. (2021). *Taking stock of city pre-k quality policy and practice: A framework*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://www.cityhealth.org/pre-k-self-assessment/>.



National Institute for Early Education Research
Rutgers, State University of New Jersey
73 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
NIEER.org

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) conducts academic research to inform policy supporting high-quality early education for all young children. NIEER provides independent research-based analysis and technical assistance to policymakers, journalists, researchers, and educators.



the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

CityHealth
7501 Wisconsin Avenue, #1310e
Bethesda, MD 20814
cityhealth.org

CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of proven policy solutions that will help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities. CityHealth regularly evaluates cities on the number and strength of their policies. Learn more at www.cityhealth.org.

The Framework for Taking Stock of City Pre-K Quality Policy and Practice was developed by the CityHealth Pre-K Leaders Network, a collaborative initiative of CityHealth and NIEER. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions to the Framework by teams from Albuquerque, Dallas, Detroit, New York, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Seattle. We also extend our thanks to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for its generous support of this project.

About the Tool

The Framework for Taking Stock of City Pre-K Quality Policy and Practice was developed by the CityHealth Pre-K Learning Network¹ to help cities and local school districts assess the quality of their public pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) programs. Referred to here as the City Pre-K Quality Framework, or simply the framework or the tool, it translates evidence and best practices into a set of items to appraise the design and implementation of the pre-K program. Rather than rating programs as simply “high quality” or “low quality,” the framework defines the steps or stages that cities and districts should traverse in their journeys toward high-quality public pre-K programming. It synthesizes current research, along with collective experience in pre-K, into concrete indicators of program quality.

HOW CAN THIS TOOL HELP CITY PRE-K LEADERS?

Self-assessment tools like this one provide a quantitative framework for assessing quality and monitoring improvements over time. The information gathered through this tool can be useful to advocates, city leaders, and district or local program administrators in building a common understanding about the strengths, weaknesses, and priorities of a city’s pre-K program. In turn, that information can help inform community-wide strategic plans, campaigns, and legislation for improving the pre-K program.

WHAT IS MEANT BY QUALITY PUBLIC PRE-K PROGRAMS?

The City Pre-K Quality Framework, designed to assess locally funded pre-K programs that aim to support children’s school readiness, is informed by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) [State of Preschool Yearbook](#) benchmarks and Jim Minervino’s “[Lessons from Research and the Classroom](#).” The NIEER benchmarks set a floor for pre-K policies necessary to promote large gains for children, as found in rigorous studies, and Minervino’s

analysis illuminates essential elements for effective public pre-K. The framework builds on these quality indicators and adds lessons learned by cities and school districts represented in the network. Note that this instrument can be used for programs serving both 3- and 4-year-olds. However, much of the source material comes from pre-K programs that primarily serve 4-year-olds, and cities may desire to add or revise indicators that better reflect their efforts to address the unique developmental needs of 3-year-olds. Many locally funded pre-K programs use mixed-delivery systems, providing pre-K in different settings, including public school, Head Start, and child care classrooms. The City Pre-K Quality Framework is designed to measure policy and implementation in classrooms that are funded to provide the local public pre-K program in all of these settings. Modifications to the framework may be needed if used in family child care settings that are part of the local pre-K program. It is not intended to be used in classrooms that are not part of the funded pre-K program; with modifications, it may be useful to assess large-scale pre-K programs that do not receive local funding, such as a Head Start agency.

Using the Framework

The framework is a self-assessment tool designed to provide an honest review of how well a city’s pre-K program aligns with the existing evidence base. It has not been validated, though it was designed by experts in early childhood education and pre-K research. City pre-K leaders should choose the components most relevant to their city and use the rating scales as a general framework for understanding what quality could look like in their community.

Local leaders should use the tool as part of a collaborative conversation across community stakeholders. Completing the self-assessment as a group or team is advised for two reasons: 1) Stakeholders will have different perceptions and understandings of the pre-K program; and 2) The process of completing the tool is itself an important community organizing process.

¹ The CityHealth Pre-K Learning Network was created for city early education leaders to learn from each other, improve their practice, and establish connections that reach beyond city limits. The goal of the network is to help cities improve their early education programs and inspire more cities to provide high-quality, accessible pre-K.

The tool can be completed by a broad group of key stakeholders, an advisory council, or an internal committee of staff. Cities should decide for themselves which approach makes the most sense, given their current context.

Teams completing the tool should limit the documentation they gather to only data that directly support their ratings. As mentioned above, the purpose is as much about getting team members on the same page about the pre-K program as it is to document facts. Thus, teams should focus on coming to common agreement. Documentation may be useful to help focus those conversations, but the burden of completing the tool should be kept to a minimum. As the process of completing the tool unfolds, participants might ask one another, “How do we know?” to help establish common understanding and challenge unfounded beliefs throughout the conversation.

SCORING THE ITEMS

The instrument includes 13 items that receive a rating from one to seven based on the consensus of the team.

Each item score is determined by the presence of individual indicators, which are grouped into four anchor columns: “Not Met” for a score of a one, “Partially Met” for a score of a three, “Fully Met” for a score of a five, or “Exemplary” for the highest score of seven. Scoring is cumulative. To achieve an anchor score, all of the indicators in the preceding columns, as well as all of the indicators for that anchor column, must be met. In-between scores — of a two, four, or six — are made when all of the indicators of the lower anchors are present, but only half of the subsequent indicators are met. Scoring should be completed from left to right, beginning with the indicators listed in the “Not Met” column.

The “Not Met” anchor is scored differently; if any of these indicators are true then the overall item score is a one. This rule applies only to the indicators under the “Not Met” anchor as they are worded in the negative. All indicators in an item should be scored as present or not to provide robust information to your team for planning. Thus, a program may meet indicators in a higher level while not meeting those in a lower level. This helps identify targets for improvement.

EXAMPLE: System Ensures Use of an Effective Curriculum

DESCRIPTION: The city guides and supports the adoption and use of research-based curriculum aligned with the ELDS, connected to a system of professional development, and implemented with high fidelity.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Curriculum Selection and Choice	The pre-K program is not required to use a curriculum.		The pre-K program is required to implement a curriculum that aligns with the ELDS and is supported by developmentally appropriate teaching practices.		A list of city/state approved/recommended curricula is provided, or there is a system for approving curricular choices.		The implemented curriculum must be researched-based, demonstrating links to positive child outcomes.
Curriculum Implementation	The city provides no guidance or support for curriculum implementation.		<p>The city offers guidance on selecting a curriculum aligned with the ELDS.</p> <p>The city develops and/or provides supporting materials for curriculum implementation (e.g., manuals, videos, or websites).</p>		<p>Ongoing technical assistance on curriculum implementation is provided.</p> <p>The city (or state) provides funding to support curriculum implementation or directly provides sponsored curricula training.</p>		The city regularly (at least every three years) collects data on the fidelity of curriculum implementation and uses the results to improve teaching. (Internal data can be used. This does not require an outside contractor/evaluator.)

INCORPORATING EQUITY PRINCIPLES IN THIS PROCESS

Many public pre-K programs are designed to address racial and ethnic inequities in school readiness in young children in a city or state. Cities may use many approaches to address these inequities, including through eligibility criteria, approaches to serving children, and efforts to monitor inequities in how the pre-K program is financed or implemented. This tool embeds equity issues throughout the 13 components identified by the CityHealth Pre-K Learning Network that form the basis for this self-assessment. Indicators reflecting issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity are marked with a double asterisk (**). In addition, for those cities interested in assessing their approach to equity more holistically, an “Equity Index” that compiles the equity indicators has been included (see Appendix A). The framework also has stand-alone components addressing issues of equity for children with special needs and children who speak a language other than English.

HOW THIS FRAMEWORK DIFFERS FROM CITYHEALTH’S ANNUAL PRE-K MEDALS

CityHealth annually assesses the largest U.S. cities on a package of evidence-based policy solutions designed to help millions of people live longer, better lives in vibrant, prosperous communities. High-quality, accessible pre-K is one of those policy solutions. At the time of publication of this framework, CityHealth’s medal criteria for high-quality, accessible pre-K focuses on two primary areas: the quality of the program and the access that local children have to that program. This framework goes beyond those two areas and provides practitioners with a method to rigorously assess their pre-K programs and identify areas for quality improvement.

COMPONENTS

- 1. Resources and Access..... 6
- 2. Strong Leadership7
- 3. Family and Community Engagement 10
- 4. Age-appropriate Learning Standards..... 12
- 5. System Ensures Use of an Effective Curriculum..... 13
- 6. Teacher Education and Compensation..... 14
- 7. Professional Development..... 16
- 8. Class Size and Ratio.....17
- 9. Learning Time..... 19
- 10. Support for Students with Special Needs20
- 11. Support for Dual Language Learners (DLL)..... 21
- 12. Child Assessments.....23
- 13. Data-driven Decision-making and Independent Evaluation25

1. Resources and Access

DESCRIPTION: Political leadership and, more rarely, judicial mandates can provide the necessary political will to create, scale up, sustain, and adequately fund high-quality early education. Because this tool is intended to be used primarily by implementers of a city’s pre-K program, it does not include items related to political will and public support, which are foundational to adequate resources and policies on access. Ideally, these resources should be adequate to provide access to high-quality pre-K to all 3- and 4-year-olds in the city. Local funding to increase access to pre-K, or to enhance the quality of pre-K being funded by other sources (e.g., state pre-K or Head Start), shows commitment to the education, health, and well-being of the young children of the city. All children benefit from participation in high-quality pre-K, and universal access should be the goal. However, whether pre-K is universal or means-tested, cities should ensure that children who will benefit the most are afforded access to the program.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Funding	There is no local (city, county, or district) public funding for pre-K access or quality enhancement.		Local public funding for pre-K is secured but has been stagnant over the past five years.		Local funding that supports pre-K quality has increased in the last three years and is either adequate to meet high-quality indicators or is on a path to increase.		Funding is incorporated into the city’s budget in a way that ensures long-term sustainability and includes built-in cost-of-living increases.
Enrollment of 4-year-olds	Fewer than 10% of 4-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program.		At least 30% of all 4-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program.		At least 50% of 4-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program.		Over 70% of 4-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K (including pre-K special education).
Enrollment of 3-year-olds	The pre-K program does not serve 3-year-olds.		At least 10% of 3-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program.		At least 30% of 3-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program.		At least 50% of 3-year-old children in the city are enrolled in the pre-K program (including pre-K special education).
Equity	There is no consideration of family or community income or racial and ethnic makeup in eligibility for or access to the pre-K program (and it is not a universal program).		**Eligibility for the pre-K program is prioritized for children in highest-need communities, for children in low-income families, or for children of color; or access is universal and available to all.		**The enrollment of children of color and children from low-income families is at least proportional to their representation among children under five years of age in the city.		**All children are eligible for the pre-K program (i.e., a universal system) and enrollment of children of color and children from low-income families is at least proportional to their representation among children under five years of age in the city.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

2. Strong Leadership

DESCRIPTION: High-ranking early learning leaders, particularly those in the agency administering the pre-K program, articulate a strong vision and exert effective leadership to make that vision a reality. Components include a well-designed early learning system with high expectations and the ability to communicate and successfully advocate for this with internal and external audiences. In addition to qualitatively meeting these criteria, the size of the office of early learning staff and any regional- and district-level support is taken into consideration. Additional supports for leadership can come from outside the agency (e.g., from higher education) or influencers, including businesses, foundations, and advocacy groups.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre-K Program Leadership	There is no one assigned at the local level (city, district, or county) who oversees pre-K efforts citywide.		The local level (city, district, or county) has an office (staff person) of early learning responsible for overseeing pre-K efforts or contracts for oversight of the pre-K program.		The lead pre-K administrator is part of the leadership of the agency, which makes decisions about major aspects of the agency's operations, including budget, staffing, priorities, and strategic planning.		The lead pre-K administrator in the city, district, or county office is a senior staff member (i.e., reports directly to the mayor or superintendent) or to a member of the senior leader's cabinet, and has ongoing contact or regular meetings with senior leaders.
Engagement of Pre-K Leadership in Citywide Programs	There is little connection between the office responsible for pre-K and other city agencies or departments.		The office responsible for pre-K efforts works with at least one other city agency or department.		The office responsible for pre-K participates in inter-agency working groups on key topics when they are formed.		The lead pre-K administrator is a key member of an interagency council in city government that focuses entirely on children's issues and ensures integration of health, social services, work force, parks and recreation, pre-K and child care.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Quality Support Infrastructure	The office responsible for pre-K gives grants to local providers, but offers no additional supports for quality improvement.		The office of early learning provides direction and support to the system through regular communication with pre-K providers (e.g., scheduling citywide meetings, promoting online best practices guidelines, and other ad hoc or planned communications).		<p>The office responsible for pre-K provides coaching and direct support to local administrators directly or through technical assistance contracts.</p> <p>The number of city/contracted staff assigned to pre-K administration, oversight, and quality improvement is adequate and complements rather than duplicates other administrative supports. [Note: This will vary by organizational structure and what functions are held within city offices vs. at the program level.]</p> <p>The city/contracted staff members assigned to pre-K administration, oversight, and quality improvement are highly qualified (i.e., have degrees and experience in early childhood education).</p>		Among the city/contracted staff members assigned to pre-K administration, oversight, and quality improvement, there is expertise in each of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and fiscal analysis • Bilingual education • Inclusion • E-learning and professional development • Social-emotional development • Approaches to learning and social studies • Math • Science • English/language arts

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Representative Advisory Council Meets Regularly to Inform Policy	There is no advisory council, or it meets irregularly.		The city has an early childhood advisory council that meets regularly to discuss changes in the pre-K program.		City early learning advisory council meets regularly (at least three- to four-times per year) to review the progress of the pre-K program, advise on concerns and solutions. It provides advice to the governing body (e.g., school board, city council) as the eyes and ears of the larger early childhood education community. The membership includes pre-K providers and community members (including parent representatives of the children served) and takes advantage of support from other influential experts, such as leaders in K-12 or higher education, health care, the business community, foundations, and/or advocacy groups.		**Racial and ethnic diversity on the advisory council mirrors that in the city's population or is more diverse.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

3. Family and Community Engagement

DESCRIPTION: The city requires programs to keep parents apprised of their children’s progress and provides resources to support parents and family members to expand upon lessons that children are learning in the classroom. Staff are culturally and linguistically responsive. Families’ needs are assessed and they are connected with community resources. The city consults with families and communities in an authentic way. Both families and the community have voice in the design and implementation of the pre-K program.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Teacher and Family Conversations About Child Progress	No policies are in place regarding communicating about a child’s progress with parents/family members.		Teachers meet with a child’s parents/family members one- to two-times per year to discuss the child’s progress and learn about the family’s goals for the child.		Teachers meet with parents/family members at the start of the year and at least two more times to discuss the child’s progress and learn about the family’s goals for the child.		There is a system in place that encourages parents/family members to have regular formal and informal communication with teachers to discuss their child’s progress and how parents, family members, and teachers can work together to support the child’s learning and well-being.
Families as Children’s First Teachers: Extending the Curriculum in the Home	No policies are in place regarding extending classroom learning at home.		Families are provided information about what children are learning in a timely newsletter or other report.		Pre-K programs form collaborative partnerships with families to develop activities that can be done at home or school that extend what children are learning in each environment.		The curriculum has specific materials. Activities and guidance support families’ extension of their child’s classroom learning at home in ways that are relevant to typical home routines (such as play groups or family learning events).
Connecting Families to Resources Based on Family Needs and Strengths	The city has no policy for assessing family needs.		The city provides information about community resources to all families.		Pre-K programs collaborate with families to establish family strengths, and families are provided information or referrals for local services where needed.		All pre-K programs are required to offer comprehensive services, either directly or through active referral to community partners, providing direct assistance to families that need help accessing services.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
**Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness to Families and Communities	The pre-K program has no policies or requirements related to cultural or linguistic responsiveness.		**Program staff receive training in cultural and linguistic responsiveness.		**Program staff are trained to understand the unique cultural backgrounds of the families they work with, and application of the training is monitored.		**Hiring decisions or workforce policies are explicitly designed to ensure that the workforce (e.g., leadership, family workers, etc.) reflects the community (e.g., incentives for bilingual staff, efforts to recruit and hire staff of color.)
**Family Voice in Program Design	The city has no policies regarding engaging family members or communities around the design or implementation of the pre-K program.		The pre-K program follows citywide requirements for community input for the pre-K program, but has no specific policies for ensuring parents are represented in those engagements.		**The city has a formal structure for gathering and responding to family input on the design and implementation of the pre-K program (such as parent councils or advisory groups). Pre-K program has resources and strategies to maximize participation (e.g., meeting times, stipends, food, child care, etc.).		** Families and community members have formal roles in advising the city and local providers on the design and implementation of the pre-K program.

****Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.**

4. Age-appropriate Learning Standards

DESCRIPTION: The city has adopted comprehensive early learning and development standards (ELDS) that are age- and developmentally appropriate. The city strongly supports the influence of these standards on practice (e.g., through materials, guidance, and professional development). Standards may be the state’s ELDS, Head Start frameworks, or developed by the city.

CONSTRUCT	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Support for Implementation of Standards	Pre-K policy does not require programs to use a set of early learning and development standards.		The city/state ELDS address all of the following domains and are aligned with any required child assessments and curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s physical well-being and motor development • Social/emotional development • Approaches toward learning • Language development • Cognition and general knowledge 		The city provides some support (e.g., professional development, digital resources, technical assistance, and/or coaching) for those charged with implementing the ELDS to ensure that they are understood (if this is not provided by the state).		The city provides multiple supports to those charged with implementing the ELDS and has methods in place to ensure that ELDS are being implemented as intended.	
Alignment of Standards Across Ages and Grades	Pre-K policy does not require programs to use a set of early learning and development standards.		The pre-K standards are aligned with the state’s K-3 standards (e.g., Common Core) and birth to age-three standards, if applicable.		Curriculum and assessment tool choices are designed to correspond to ELDS standards.		The pre-K program implements a coherent system of learning standards, curriculum, assessment and professional development creating continuity of learning across the age span.	
**Inclusivity of Standards	Pre-K policy does not require programs to use a set of early learning and development standards.		ELDS provide minimal guidance relevant to the cultural or linguistic backgrounds of children.		**The ELDS reflect awareness of children’s diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.		**The city provides explicit guidance on how the learning standards can be implemented in practice with diverse learners, including dual language learners.	

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

5. System Ensures Use of an Effective Curriculum

DESCRIPTION: The city guides and supports the adoption and use of a research-based curriculum that is aligned with the ELDS, connected to a system of professional development, and implemented with high fidelity.

CONSTRUCT	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Curriculum Selection and Choice	The pre-K program is not required to use a curriculum.		The pre-K program is required to implement a curriculum that aligns with the ELDS and is supported by developmentally appropriate teaching practices.		A list of city/state approved/recommended curricula is provided, or there is a system for approving curricular choices.		The implemented curriculum must be researched-based, demonstrating links to positive child outcomes.
Curriculum Implementation	The city provides no guidance or support for curriculum implementation.		<p>The city offers guidance on selecting a curriculum aligned with the ELDS.</p> <p>The city develops and/or provides supporting materials for curriculum implementation (e.g., manuals, videos, or websites).</p>		<p>Ongoing technical assistance on curriculum implementation is provided.</p> <p>The city (or state) provides funding to support curriculum implementation or directly provides sponsored curriculum training.</p>		The city regularly (at least every three years) collects data on the fidelity of curriculum implementation and uses the results to improve teaching. [Note: Internal data can be used. This does not require an outside contractor/evaluator.]
**Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness	The recommended or required curriculum does not include specific supports for culturally and linguistically appropriate pedagogy. Or, if the curriculum is selected locally, there are no requirements for ensuring that a curriculum is culturally and linguistically appropriate.		The city provides limited and general guidance related to supports for cultural and linguistic responsiveness (e.g., general policies or guidelines).		**The city ensures that the enacted curriculum is culturally and linguistically appropriate for all children and families served.		**The city examines curriculum fidelity data separately for children or communities of color to ensure equity in access to quality.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

6. Teacher Education and Compensation

DESCRIPTION: All lead teachers have at least a bachelor’s degree plus suitable credentials in early learning and are paid at same level as K-3 teachers. Assistant teachers have at least an entry-level credential in early learning and receive salary parity with assistant teachers in K-3 settings.

CONSTRUCT	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Degrees and Credentials	There are no degree requirements for lead pre-K teachers beyond minimal college credit or encouragement to have prior early learning credentials or experience.		Pre-K teachers in all sites are required to have at least an associate degree with specialization in early childhood education.		All or nearly all lead pre-K teachers in all settings have a bachelor’s degree and early childhood teacher specialization (e.g., certification, license, endorsement, etc.).		The city works directly with institutes of higher education to ensure that the coursework and practicum experiences provided prepare teachers to implement city pre-K methods (i.e., ELDS, curriculum, and assessment).
Salary Parity	There is not salary parity for teachers in any sectors providing pre-K.		Pre-K teachers in at least one sector have salary parity with K-3 public school teachers.		Pre-K teachers have salary parity and are on the same salary schedule with K-3 public school teachers in all types of pre-K classrooms (e.g., child care, Head Start, and public school).		Assistant teachers have salary parity with instructional aids in public schools.
Assistant Teacher Degrees and Credentials	There are no credential requirements beyond a high school diploma for assistant pre-K teachers.		Assistant pre-K teachers are required to have minimal initial training, college credit, or prior early learning experience.		All or nearly all assistant pre-K teachers have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent formal requirement for entry-level early childhood education expertise.		The city works directly with CDA providers (or equivalent) to ensure that the pre-K program prepares teacher assistants to implement city pre-K methods (i.e., ELDS, curriculum, and assessment).

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
**Workforce Diversity	The city does not collect data on and has no initiatives to address the diversity of the pre-K teaching workforce.		The city reviews data on the diversity of the pre-K teaching workforce, but does not make any special efforts to address diversity.		**The city has publicly stated the importance of having a diverse workforce and publishes data on the diversity of the workforce by job category (e.g., administrator, lead teacher, and assistant teacher) and setting (e.g., school, child care, and Head Start).		**The city collects data about the diversity and specific expertise of the teaching workforce to meet the specific needs of population and uses these data to make improvements (e.g., participation in publicly funded scholarship or wage supplement programs, concerted recruitment efforts, extra compensation to bilingual teachers to reimburse for the need to translate curriculum, or "grow your own" initiatives).

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

7. Professional Development

DESCRIPTION: Professional development is most effective when sustained as part of a continuous improvement cycle with high expectations for teachers. Professional development is both formal and informal (e.g., peer mentoring). The city and other organizations within the system have adequate capacity to provide sufficient quality and quantity of professional development.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personalized Professional Development for Lead Teachers	Pre-K teachers are not systematically offered professional development opportunities.		Teaching staff in all settings are provided with at least 15 hours of professional development annually.		Teachers in all settings are required to have written individualized annual professional development plans.		Programs develop professional learning systems that are informed by results of child and classroom assessments and professional development plans of teaching staff (i.e., staff are provided differentiated professional learning opportunities that meet their professional development goals).
Professional Coaching for Lead Teachers	There is no coaching program for lead teachers in the pre-K program.		Some lead teachers have opportunities to participate in ongoing classroom-embedded support (e.g., coaching).		Lead teachers in all settings are provided ongoing classroom-embedded support (e.g., coaching) at least every other month.		Coaching caseloads are at least one coach to 20 classrooms (i.e., a lower ratio is used with new and struggling lead teachers and advanced teachers require less support) resulting in an average of one coaching session per month.
Personalized Professional Development for Assistant Teachers	Assistant teachers are not systematically provided professional development.		Assistant teachers in all settings are provided at least 15 hours of professional development annually.		Assistant teachers in all settings are provided ongoing classroom-embedded support (e.g., coaching). Assistant teachers in all settings are required to have written individualized annual professional development plans.		Assistant teachers are included in all aspects of the professional learning systems.

8. Class Size and Ratio

DESCRIPTION: All pre-K classrooms in all settings (e.g., public schools, private pre-Ks, Head Start, child care centers, etc.) should have a maximum of 20 children in each classroom and 10 children per teaching staff person. This is not just required by policy, but is also maintained in practice.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Class Size	There is no policy regarding class size.		<p>Regulations set the maximum number of preschool-aged children in a classroom.</p> <p>The maximum class size of 20 children is met in at least one setting (e.g., public schools, private pre-Ks, Head Start, child care centers, etc.), but not all.</p>		<p>Pre-K classrooms have a maximum of 20 children in the classroom.</p> <p>If 3-year-olds are included in the pre-K program, then the maximum class size is smaller than 20 children.</p>		The city collects data to ensure that the maximum class size is not exceeded.
Adult-to-Child Ratio	There is no policy regarding adult-to-child ratio.		<p>Two adults are required in the classroom in at least one setting (e.g., public schools, private pre-Ks, Head Start, child care centers, etc.), but not all.</p> <p>Classrooms have a maximum of 10 children per teaching staff person in at least one setting.</p> <p>Classroom teacher-to-student ratios are specified in pre-K regulation or program standards.</p>		All pre-K classrooms in all settings have at least two teaching staff, typically a lead teacher and an assistant.		Pre-K classrooms have more than two teaching staff and staffing structures minimize the number of different staff regularly assigned to each classroom (i.e., children see the same teachers daily).

CONSTRUCT	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Individualizing Instruction	There is no policy regarding individualizing instruction for children.		Policy requires that programs individualize instruction, but no guidance or resources are available to support teachers in individualizing instruction.		In addition to regulating class size, city has designed a system of supports for meeting the individualized educational and developmental needs of children, ensuring multiple opportunities for individual and small group instruction.		**Program staffing is funded/deployed at a higher level when there are high concentrations of children needing additional attention or more support (e.g., children in protective services, homeless children, recent immigrants). [Note: If the classroom teacher-to-child ratio is at or lower than one-to-eight, then this indicator is met.]

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

9. Learning Time

DESCRIPTION: Most children are served or offered a full-year, full-school-day pre-K program. A full-day pre-K program should be within a half-hour of the length of a first-grade day (typically about six hours).

		Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary	
CONSTRUCT		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Program Period	The pre-K program does not operate at least nine months.			The pre-K program is offered for at least nine months of the year, equivalent to the school calendar, but may offer fewer than 180 days.		All pre-K classrooms operate annually at a minimum of an academic calendar (e.g., 180 days per year). All pre-K programs operate five days a week.		**Families have access on-site (or with transportation to a nearby site) for child care before and after the school day, during holidays, and over the summer break, with a priority for the most vulnerable children.	
Hours per Day	The pre-K program does not offer at least three hours per day of pre-K.			The pre-K program is offered at least three hours per day for at least four days per week.		All pre-K classrooms in all settings operate at least six hours per day (or the equivalent of a full school day for first-grade students) and five days per week.		To extend learning time, systems are in place to support wrap-around child care teachers (e.g., before and after school and vacation) in implementing curriculum that augments the pre-K curriculum. Systems are in place to assist communication among wrap-around child care and pre-K teachers to support coherent practices.	

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

10. **Support for Students with Special Needs in General Education Pre-K Classrooms

DESCRIPTION: Programs provide strong supports for children with special needs, including an emphasis on inclusion. Pre-K special education is integrated into the continuous improvement process and other key components of the early learning system. In addition, there are city policies related to providing supports for pre-K children who have special needs enrolled in inclusion classrooms in the pre-K program.

CONSTRUCT	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Inclusion	Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are not included in general education pre-K classrooms beyond social mainstreaming (e.g., eating lunch together or attending special activities together).		Children with special needs are included in the pre-K program as indicated in their IEPs.		City regularly collects data to inform a plan for increasing inclusion of children with IEPs in pre-K general education classrooms.		Nearly all children with IEPs are included in the general education pre-K classroom at least to some extent (i.e., on a continuum of inclusion from social mainstreaming to full inclusion with push-in therapies.)
Classroom Makeup	The proportion of children with IEPs is more than 1/2 in at least one general education classroom.		The proportion of children with IEPs in each general education pre-K classroom is limited to no more than 1/3.		The proportion of children with IEPs in each pre-K classroom is limited to no more than 1/4.		The proportion of children with IEPs in each pre-K classroom is limited to the proportion found in the general population.
Professional Supports for Teachers	Teachers are not offered professional learning opportunities for working with children with special needs.		Teachers are offered large group training on working with children with special needs.		Coaching or other in-classroom professional learning for teachers to support children with special needs is provided.		The city works with higher education institutions to ensure that teaching degree candidates are adequately prepared to teach children with IEPs in a general education classroom. A hiring criterion is experience/expertise in inclusion.
Recommended Practices of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council of Exceptional Children¹	Programs are not given any information or requirements related to DEC Recommended Practices ²		The city shares information about DEC Recommended Practices.		Pre-K programs are required to implement DEC Recommended Practices and supports for implementation are provided by the city.		Fidelity of implementation of DEC Recommended Practices is regularly measured and results are used to inform professional learning opportunities and coaching.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

1 <https://www.dec-sped.org/rp-mono-base>

2 <https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>

11. **Support for Dual Language Learners (DLL) and Bilingual Acquisition

DESCRIPTION: Policies and funding decisions are rooted in an understanding that bilingualism is an asset for all children. Programs have a well-developed strategy for educating dual language learners (DLL) that is designed to build on their unique characteristics and that values the contribution of their home language and culture. The city strongly supports the implementation of this strategy and bilingualism for all with guidance, materials, and professional development. Ideally, classrooms are led by bilingual teachers with bilingual assistant teachers and a strong system of supports. At a minimum, classrooms where there is a prevalent home language other than English have bilingual teaching staff.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Policies about Serving Dual Language Learners (DLL)	The city has no specific policies to regulate services for DLL in pre-K programs.		Programs are required to know the home language of each child.		Programs are required to have an approved written plan for supporting children who are DLL. There is coordination with the K-3 system to ensure coherent support for individual emergent bilingual children.		Structured observational data is collected to assess the quality of supports for emergent bilinguals and used to inform program improvement. Staff have complete information about family heritage and language inputs in the home.
Program Communication with Families	There is no city-wide effort to communicate with families in their home languages.		The city provides recruitment, enrollment, and outreach information to families in their home languages.		Translation services are provided in all individual and group meetings for parents who have limited English proficiency.		To facilitate full participation, some meetings for families that speak a common home language are held in that language, or small group language-alike discussions are incorporated into meetings.
Resources for Classes Serving DLL	The city provides no special resources or accommodations for classes serving DLL.		Professional learning opportunities focused on effective practices for working with DLL and their families are provided.		Coaching or other in-situ support of pre-K teachers to support DLL and bilingual acquisition is provided.		Extra/additional funding is allocated to city-funded pre-K programs to serve DLL and to implement bilingual instruction.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

		Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary	
CONSTRUCT		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Dual Language Instruction	City policy prohibits bilingual instruction in city-funded pre-K classrooms.			The city has data showing that classrooms in which more 1/2 of children speak the same non-English home language have at least one teaching staff member who speaks that home language.		More than 1/2 of children – regardless of home language – have an opportunity to attend a pre-K classroom that offers dual language instruction in English and predominant other home languages.		More than 3/4 of children – regardless of home language – have an opportunity to attend a pre-K classroom that offers dual language instruction in English and predominant other home languages.	
	**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.								

12. Child Assessments

DESCRIPTION: Pre-K programs ensure children receive vision, hearing, developmental, and other health screenings and have a robust system of timely referrals. Child assessments are aligned with standards and are used to inform teaching with a focus on improving outcomes for children. Assessments inform administrators, teachers, and others who support teacher improvement. The city provides training and other supports to ensure teachers and program leaders can use assessments well.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Screening and Service Referrals	No screenings are required.		The pre-K program ensures that children have received vision, hearing, and developmental screenings, and appropriate referrals are made if indicated.		A system is in place to ensure timely follow-up on referrals and to assist families in navigating the referral process.		Families have access to a specific facilitator who can assist with navigating referral systems and services.
Comprehensive Assessments	Programs are not required to assess children, formally or informally, in the pre-K classroom.		City policy requires the pre-K program to assess children's learning and development more than once per year.		All domains of child development (e.g., language and literacy, numeracy and math concepts, social/emotional development, approaches to learning, physical/motor development, and general cognition) are assessed on an ongoing basis.		Assessment methods and systems are aligned with those used in K-3, and mechanisms are in place to support a coherent approach to the use of assessment data in pre-K-to-grade 3 instruction.
Reliability and Validity of Assessments	The city does not examine the reliability or validity of chosen assessments.		The city selects assessments based on their psychometric properties in studies. Teachers are provided workshops or online training to understand the assessment tool(s) and how to use them.		**Educational leaders use multiple methods to ensure that ongoing child assessment measures are implemented reliably (e.g., conducting assessment workgroups in which teachers score each other's data, providing assessment-focused coaching; requiring inter-rater reliability at regular intervals, actively ensuring that observers are aware of and ameliorate cultural biases in their ratings.		Systematic methods for ensuring that the assessment data maintain concurrent and predictive validity are used at least every five years.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of Assessment Data for Improvement	The city does not provide information about how child assessment data must be used.	Child assessment data are used only for accountability purposes.	The results of child assessments are used in the classroom OR by the pre-K program in at least one of the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make adjustments to curricula • To communicate with families about their child's progress • To track child and program outcomes over time • To guide teacher professional learning • To inform technical assistance 		The results of child assessments are used in the classroom AND by the pre-K program in all of the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make adjustments to curricula • To communicate with families about their child's progress • To track child and program outcomes over time • To guide teacher professional learning • To inform technical assistance 		Child assessment data are used to develop supplemental learning resources for families.
**Cultural and Linguistic Appropriateness	The city does not consider the cultural or linguistic appropriateness of assessment tools.		Some attempt has been made to select assessment measures that are appropriate for the population of children served, but the system is not fully developed.		**All assessment tools are developmentally appropriate and appropriate for the population of children (e.g., in the home language of a child).		**Psychometric analysis of screening and assessment tools shows no bias for different racial or ethnic groups or other population variability (e.g., by region, by gender, or by family income).

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

13. Data-Driven Decision-Making and Independent Evaluation

DESCRIPTION: Data are collected and regularly used at all levels – from the teacher to the administration – to inform decisions regarding practice and improvement. Independent evaluation has been conducted, preferably within the last five to 10 years. The city supports the use of data for decision-making by others and uses data to drive its decisions. Ideally, there is a city-supported continuous improvement system operating at all levels.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Classroom Quality Assessments are Used to Inform Practice	No policies are in place to ensure systematic data collection at any level.		Some classrooms receive structured observations of classroom quality at least once every three years.		Classrooms receive structured observations of classroom quality at least once a year, or a systematic sampling approach for assessing classroom quality is implemented every year.		Classroom data are used to improve pre-K program quality at the classroom, agency/district, and city levels (e.g., to provide program staff with technical assistance, or to make funding decisions). **The city has, or has access to, a centralized system for aggregating and linking data across departments. The data are routinely analyzed for inequities in access, quality, dosage, and outcomes by race and ethnicity, as well as for other key populations.
Appropriateness of Classroom Quality Assessments	There is no policy requiring classroom quality assessments to be conducted.		Observation instruments meet professional standards for reliability and validity.		Observation instruments have evidence that they predict child learning.		**Observation instruments are sensitive to classroom practices that are culturally appropriate for the populations served.

**Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.

	Not Met		Partially Met		Fully Met		Exemplary
CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Independent Evaluation of Program Outcomes for Participants	No program evaluation has been conducted.		A program evaluation was conducted more than five years ago.		An outcomes evaluation of the pre-K program has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted in the past five years • Plans are in place to continue evaluations at regular intervals • The pre-K program evaluation design provides credible evidence of the effects of program participation (e.g., prospective experimental or quasi-experimental design). 		**Outcomes evaluation includes an assessment of differential impact of the pre-K program on populations by race and ethnicity, as well as for other key populations. Results are used to inform improvements.

***Reflects issues of racial, ethnic, or economic equity.*

Appendix A: Policy Indicators to Promote Equity

[Please note that items 10 and 11 in their entirety should also be reviewed when assessing a program's policies to promote equity.]

1. Eligibility for the pre-K program is prioritized for children in highest-need communities, for children in low-income families, or for children of color; or access is universal and available to all.
2. Enrollment of children of color and children from low-income families is at least proportional to their representation among children under five years of age.
3. All children are eligible for the pre-K program (i.e., a universal system) and enrollment of children of color and children from low-income families is at least proportional to their representation among children under five years old.
4. Staff receive training in cultural and linguistic responsiveness.
5. Staff are provided training to understand the unique cultural backgrounds of the families with whom they work.
6. Hiring decisions or workforce policies are explicitly designed to ensure that the workforce (e.g., leadership, family workers, etc.) reflects the community (e.g., incentives for bilingual staff and/or efforts to recruit and hire staff of color.)
7. The city has a formal structure for gathering and responding to family input on the design and implementation of the pre-K program. This may include parent councils or advisory groups.
8. Members of the community and family members have formal roles in advising the city and local providers on the design and implementation of the pre-K program.
9. The ELDS reflect awareness of children's diverse backgrounds.
10. The city provides explicit guidance on how the learning standards can be implemented in practice with diverse learners, including dual language learners.
11. The city ensures that the enacted curriculum is appropriate for all children and families served.
12. The city examines curriculum fidelity data separately for children or communities of color to ensure equity in access to quality.
13. The city has publicly stated the importance of having a diverse workforce and shared data on the diversity of the workforce.
14. The city collects data about the diversity and specific expertise of the teaching workforce to meet the needs of the population and uses these data to make improvements (e.g., participation in publicly funded scholarship or wage supplement programs, concerted recruitment efforts, extra compensation to bilingual teachers to reimburse for the need to translate curriculum, and grow your own initiatives.)
15. Program staffing is funded/deployed at a higher level when there are high concentrations of children needing additional attention or more support (e.g., children in protective services, homeless children, and recent immigrants). [Note: If ratio of teachers to children is already at or below one-to-eight then this indicator is met.]
16. Families have access on-site (or with transportation to a nearby site) for child care before and after the school day, during holidays, and over the summer break, with a priority for the most vulnerable children.
17. Educational leaders use multiple methods to ensure that ongoing child assessment measures are implemented reliably (e.g., conducting assessment workgroups in which teachers score each other's data, providing assessment-focused coaching, requiring inter-rater reliability at regular intervals, and actively ensuring that observers are aware of and ameliorate cultural biases in their ratings).
18. All assessment tools are developmentally appropriate AND appropriate for the population of children (e.g., in the home language of a child).
19. Psychometric analysis of screening and assessment tools shows no bias for different racial or ethnic groups or other population variability (e.g., by region, by gender, and by family income).
20. Observation instruments are sensitive to classroom practices that are culturally appropriate for the populations served.
21. The city has, or has access to, a centralized system for aggregating and linking data across departments. The data are routinely analyzed for inequities in access, quality, dosage, and outcomes by race and ethnicity, as well as for other key populations.
22. Outcomes evaluation includes an assessment of differential impact of the pre-K program on populations by race and ethnicity, as well as for other key populations. Results are used to inform improvements.



cityhealth

AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

cityhealth.org



@CityHealthOrg



@City_Health



@CityHealth-Org