

Delaware First for Fours: Preschool Development Expansion Grant

Delaware Department of Education: Early Development and Learning Resources Workgroup
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ABSTRACT

Delaware's First for Fours Pre-Kindergarten Program will build on its current nationally-recognized quality system of program delivery by adding 824 State-funded slots to expand families' access to the highest quality pre-kindergarten for four-year-olds and by enriching the delivery of service in existing classrooms through extended days and hours or through the addition of quality indicators in its other preschool classroom models. 553 new slots (80 of which are blended Head Start and preschool) will be added in 31 high-need locations across the state. 271 enhancement slots will extend high-quality pre-kindergarten services for children and families at 200% or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a total of 824 slots. These new services will reach about 19% of Delaware's four-year-olds across all three of Delaware's counties; the State will open 13% new slots and over 6% of its existing slots will be impacted through enhancements.

Delaware First for Fours Pre-Kindergarten Program will build on a history of success to advance a Delaware vision of high-quality pre-kindergarten to meet four goals and objectives:

- Expand the quantity of State-funded pre-kindergarten slots available to low-income children and their families within two or more of Delaware's high-priority zones.
- Enhance the quality of pre-kindergarten classrooms to serve as models of excellence for Comprehensive Services, family engagement, and children and families with diverse learning needs.
- Integrate strategies and resources into classroom and program practice that strengthen and support collaborative, quality relationships with families, children, and staff.
- Improve the State's early learning system to leverage strengths and ensure continued improvements in the birth through grade two continuum of learning and development.

These goals will be realized by innovations that will highlight Delaware First for Fours classrooms as models of excellence and practices that expand Delaware's Quality Improvement

Rating System, Delaware Stars, to reflect a set of standards that define the highest quality of practice, Star 5+. School district, Head Start, child care, and State-funded pre-kindergarten Subgrantees' classrooms will be led by bachelor-degree teachers who use an intentional teaching design that integrates curriculum, standards, and assessment to define learning goals for children in classrooms with a maximum of 20 children and 2 adults. Comprehensive Services including developmental and health screenings, nutritional education and supports, family service supports and referrals, transition practices, and high-intensity family engagement practices will round out the service delivery. Inclusive classrooms and positive behavior support/trauma smart support strategies will be embedded within providers' practice. Enhancements including summer enrichment programs and research-based core professional development that support assistant teachers' efforts to earn their associate's degree build collaborative practice between K-12 and preschools and create teacher learning communities that will further guide high quality.

Delaware First for Fours Subgrantees include: *New Castle County*: Appoquinimink School District, Brandywine School District, Christina Cultural Arts Center, Christina School District, Colonial School District, EastSide Charter School, Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center, Latin American Community Center (La Fiesta), Newark Day Nursery, New Castle County Head Start, Red Clay School District, St. Michael's School and Nursery, Wilmington Head Start. *Kent County*: Capital School District, Telamon Head Start. *Sussex County*: Laurel School District, Parents and Children Together at Tech (PACTT), Telamon Head Start.

The State's Purchase of Care (child care subsidy) and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants will partner to provide services for families and Subgrantees. The local community college will offer coursework that leads to higher-level degrees for teaching assistants. Intended statewide partners who will complete competitive bids for contracts include family education providers, inclusion specialists, early childhood mental health specialists, nutrition and health providers, and professional development instructor agencies.

In addition to the statewide comprehensive pre-kindergarten models of excellence, Delaware's early childhood system will benefit from Delaware First for Fours' anticipated outcomes of stronger, aligned early learning hubs that have joined together families with school district and community pre-kindergarten programs to optimize children's school readiness as demonstrated by Delaware's kindergarten entry assessment, the Delaware Early Learner Survey.