



Universal Pre-Kindergarten for Nevada's Children



Children's
Advocacy
ALLIANCE

Nevada's Academic Improvements Start in Pre-School

Nevada consistently ranks at the bottom of the list in Education. Kids Count data from 2024 shows a significant increase in the number of three- and four-year-olds not enrolled in school from 64% in 2017 to 67% in 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated educational disparities, particularly affecting early education.

In the 2022-2023 school year Nevada enrolled only about 7% of eligible four-year-olds in a Pre-K program.* Without consistent early education, children are more likely to experience long-term academic challenges, reduced social skills, and lower overall educational attainment. This achievement gap has damning effects for both the child as they enter adulthood and for Nevada's workforce economy.

The educational challenges we face in our state must be addressed early in a child's educational journey by providing quality affordable early learning opportunities that meet the unique needs of Nevada's families. Investing in Universal Pre-Kindergarten now will yield valuable dividends later.

Nevada's Pathway to Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

- Nevada **CAN** and **SHOULD** invest in Universal Pre-K for all 4 year olds in the next biennium.
- **Infrastructure is key.** Lawmakers must ensure that strong Early Childhood Systems governance structure, workforce incentives, and training & financial support for center and home-based childcare providers to implement UPK is in place.
- The success of Universal Pre-K requires a **mixed delivery model** that incorporates public schools, private centers, and community-based organizations. This model expedites placements ensuring more children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Investing in high-quality, publicly funded Universal Pre-K is essential in building a prosperous future for Nevada



Recommendation

Invest in Universal Pre-K for all 4-year-olds with the goal of expanding seats to 3-year-olds in future biennia

Children who arrive at kindergarten prepared to learn perform better throughout school

Estimates of the current gap in achievement scores at kindergarten entry show that African American and Hispanic children enter kindergarten with lower average reading and math scores than white children. Results suggest that Universal Pre-K significantly contributes to reducing the achievement gap by increasing the opportunity for families to access quality early childhood education specifically in historically underserved communities of color.*

African American children are currently nine months behind their white peers in math and about 6.7 months behind in reading.* Analyses suggest that access to a high-quality Universal Pre-K program would reduce gaps in math skills 45% which is equivalent to four months of learning while gaps in reading would be completely erased.



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