

Saint Paul 3K Executive Summary

What Is Saint Paul 3K?

Saint Paul 3K is a concerted effort – on the part of the City, Ramsey County, Saint Paul Public Schools and the community - to provide **equitable access to affordable, high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year old children in Saint Paul**. This effort follows the examples of several cities across the country that have initiated their own preschool programs (Denver, San Francisco, New York City, Cincinnati and Dayton Ohio).

The Need

Saint Paul's youngest children, and our community, deserve more support than they currently receive. While our youngest children are the future of our community, there are currently **nearly 950 children on waiting lists**, seeking school-based PreK, Head Start, Child Care Assistance and Early Learning Scholarships that they cannot get due to lack of funding, while **too many Saint Paul children are not ready for kindergarten**. Despite increases in state/local funding for early childhood education, **obstacles remain**:

- **Finding childcare remains difficult and expensive**; Minnesota is the 5th most expensive state for childcare, putting a strain on families across Saint Paul and often leading to gender inequities when one parent stays home.
- **Scholarships do not cover the full cost** of year-round, full-time care, and only provide access for children only below the 185% poverty level.

The Benefits

Early childhood education is one of the best investments in the overall health, well-being, and future success of children and their families. Early childhood education **helps eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, decreases the poverty rate** through support of parents, and **provides an economic boost** for families - who no longer have to worry about the expenses of child care. High quality early care and education also boosts our economy thanks to a more stable workforce, thus attracting families and businesses looking to call Saint Paul home. A strong system will support families in the transition into early elementary school. It is a **win-win for our community**.

3K Program Elements

Broad Eligibility

- All Saint Paul residents are eligible, regardless of immigration status. All 3K students must receive Early Childhood Screening within 90 days of entering the program.

Quality Providers

- **All 3K providers** will be **Parent Aware rated, accept public payments** and children with **special needs**, gather and share data for 3K evaluation, **receive specialized training**, have professional learning communities available, and accept ongoing and consistent evaluation of their programs.
- **Mixed delivery system**, including a variety of early learning environments (child care centers, Head Start, school based preschools and licensed family care) and schedules (full-day-plus, year-round, part-time and school-year-only care).
- **Outreach to providers** to get as many as possible to be part of the 3K system and to improve quality.

Easy to Access

- **Provides a one-stop system to navigate early learning options** in Saint Paul, including a **website** allowing parents to search among 3K providers and enroll.
- Enrollment and outreach workers will **find hard-to-reach families and help all families** enroll in 3K and other forms of child care assistance.
- **Tuition support** will be available on a sliding scale to all 3K families. Families below a certain income level will receive a fully-funded 3K slot, up to and including year-round, full-day care.
- Once determined, families' **tuition support does not decrease** throughout the program even if their income changes. 3K dollars will be **"last dollar in,"** supplementing other funding.

Rooted in Equity

- Provide every child with access to quality early learning, but **prioritizing those most in need.**
- **Target those most vulnerable** and at-risk youth and families with extra support and benefits.
- **Increase the pipeline** of high quality teachers & providers who are **bilingual, native, and/or diverse.**

Multi-Generational

- Multi-generational approach – 3K will help **parents connect with additional resources** (such as job training, stable housing, medical and dental care, food support, etc.) so that parents are in the best position to support their children.
- **Parent role in 3K governance.** Parents involved to ensure 3K designed to meet their needs.

Data-Driven

- **Robust evaluation plan** measuring kindergarten readiness and longer-term outcomes (3rd grade reading, high school graduation).

Coordination with Ramsey County and Saint Paul Public Schools

- **Alignment with school year calendar** and age cut-off dates; focus on transition to kindergarten.
- **Partnership with Ramsey County** to enroll children most in need (those in child protection, foster care, public assistance and community corrections) and to provide connections to social services for parents.

While funding from the state and federal level can support many of Saint Paul's children, **only a city-led effort can guarantee support for all its children.** The most stable and productive way to provide the necessary funding for the program is an **increase in the city's general sales tax.** We can follow the lead set by other cities, including focusing on the short and long-term benefits, the commitment to strong accountability to taxpayers, and our shared desire to ensure every child in Saint Paul has the support s/he needs to enter kindergarten ready for success. If Saint Paul is to prosper in the future, **we need to make sure that all our children have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.**