

To all New York City Pre-K for All, 3-K for All, Head Start and EarlyLearn families:

The Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) believes all children should receive high-quality early care and education from birth to five years old, and beyond. It is our aim to provide your child with a culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate learning environment where they can safely and confidently explore, connect, and grow to reach their full potential. When children are offered equitable opportunities to live up to their potential, and families are supported to be their strongest selves, children have a healthy start in school and life.

This Commitment to Families document offers a framework of the universal goals held by the Division of Early Childhood Education across all program types, and what to expect from your child’s program in the following areas:



Two Generation Approach



Teaching & Learning



Diversity & Inclusion



Program Operations



Mental & Physical Health



Resources

We also collected contact information under the Resources section should you have any feedback or questions about your child’s program. Remember, you can always call the Parent Support Line (P311): Dial 311 and say “schools” or call (718) 935-2009 for general questions and support.

The DECE is committed to supporting your child and working with programs to help your child thrive, no matter the setting or program size. We believe support for the whole family’s well-being is fundamental to helping children grow.

Sincerely,

The NYC DOE Division of Early Childhood Education

To all New York City Pre-K for All, 3-K for All, Head Start, and EarlyLearn programs:

The Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) believes all young learners should receive high-quality early childhood care and education from birth to five years old, and beyond. It is our aim to support you in providing children with a culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate learning environment where they can safely and confidently explore, connect, and grow to reach their full potential. When children are offered equitable opportunities to live up to their potential, and families are supported to be their strongest selves, children have a healthier start in school and life.

This Commitment to Families document offers families a framework of the universal goals held by the Division of Early Childhood Education across all our program types, and what families can expect from their child's program. It also includes contact information should they have any feedback or questions about their child's program. This document will be made available to families through multiple pathways, such as the NYC DOE website and the Birth to Five Policy Handbook. We encourage you to pass this along to your staff and families at the beginning of the school year as well.

The DECE is committed to working with programs to help children thrive, no matter the setting or program size. We commit to partnering with program leaders and teaching teams in building strong relationships with families, because we believe support for the whole family's well-being is fundamental in helping children grow.

Sincerely,

The NYC DOE Division of Early Childhood Education

## The Division of Early Childhood Commitment to

The mission of the DOE Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is to create the best early care and education system in the country so that every New York City child has a fair shot at living up to their full potential. To support this mission, the DECE offers the following commitments and resources to families to ensure all young learners are receiving the highest quality care possible.

There are six commitment sections, and below is an overview of each one. Click on the title to learn more.

### Table of Contents



#### [Two Generation Approach](#)

*The DECE commits to serving the whole family to ensure families' varying needs and goals are incorporated in program design and decision-making.*



#### [Teaching & Learning](#)

*The DECE commits to supporting your child in play-based learning, exploration, and partnering with the whole family to ensure the goals you have for your child are incorporated into instruction.*



#### [Diversity & Inclusion](#)

*The DECE commits to including and honoring the diverse family and cultural backgrounds in our city as we co-create early care and education programs and family resources.*



#### [Program Operations](#)

*The DECE commits to providing your family access to a free, full-day, high-quality program.*



#### [Mental & Physical Health](#)

*The DECE commits to providing an early learning experience where all children and families feel both physically and mentally healthy, safe, and nurtured.*



#### [Resources](#)

*Find resources and contact information for your questions about family engagement, enrollment, special education, and multilingual learners.*



## Two Generation Approach

*The DECE commits to serving the whole family to ensure families' varying needs and goals are incorporated in program design and decision-making.*

A two-generation (2Gen) approach builds family well-being by intentionally working with children and the adults in their lives together. The approach recognizes that families come in all different shapes and sizes, as defined by families themselves. The DECE recognizes that caregivers are their children's first teachers and advocates, and in order to build a high quality program, early childhood leaders and staff must establish a whole family approach for children and the adults in their lives.

- Programs will recognize parents and caregivers as their child's first teacher, and partner with you to support the goals you have for your child's learning experience. See a sample [Beginning of Year Questionnaire](#) we recommend programs use to set goals with families, and [End of Year Questionnaire](#) to help families transition into the next year. See translations [here](#).
- Program administrators will consider family voice when making programmatic decisions.
- Programs will honor and reflect the diversity of family and cultural backgrounds when sharing important information about your child's learning and the program's policies and activities.
- Programs will stay knowledgeable about resources in their communities and connect families to these resources when needed to ensure the well-being and stability of the whole family.
- Head Start programs will engage in a governance process and family partnership agreements with all families. For more information, view [Head Start Program Governance Standards](#).



## Diversity & Inclusion

*The DECE commits to including and honoring the diverse family and cultural backgrounds in our city as we co-create early care and education programs and family resources.*

- Programs will provide a warm and welcoming environment that respects and celebrates your family's language and culture.
- Programs' efforts to engage you will focus on communication in your preferred language, and honor your family's racial and cultural identities.
- Programs will work to understand the unique needs of each community and use this knowledge to inform decision-making.
- Programs must provide equal educational opportunities without regard to actual or perceived race, color, religion, age, creed, ethnicity, national origin, alienage, citizenship status, weight, disability, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity or expression, or level of independence<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Programs offering an extended day and year, including Head Start, have income eligibility and other requirements that families must meet in order to enroll their child. These programs are designated in MySchools.

- For example, a program may not deny your child entry if they do not yet use the bathroom independently or if they do not yet dress themselves independently.
- If your child has a disability, they have the right to attend early childhood programs.
  - Children 0-3 years old currently receiving Early Intervention (EI) services through the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) may be able to receive their services at their early childhood program.
  - Children who are 3-5 years old can attend early childhood programs (1) whether or not you plan to submit a referral to the CPSE or if you have already submitted a referral to the DOE; (2) if you are currently going through the CPSE process; or (3) if your child already has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), including if they have an IEP that recommends special class in an integrated setting (SCIS) or special class.<sup>2</sup>



## Mental & Physical Health

*The DECE commits to providing an early learning experience where all children and families feel both physically and mentally healthy, safe, and nurtured.*

- Programs will provide a welcoming, supportive, trauma-informed<sup>3</sup>, and diverse learning environment and partner with families to meet their current social and emotional needs.
- Your child’s teaching team will get to know your child and their needs through responsive caregiving, and offer a nurturing relationship and learning environment that meets their physical, social, and emotional needs. For example, as your child grows, they will learn how to recognize, describe, and express strong feelings.
- Programs will offer or help coordinate with another program any necessary health or medical accommodations to allow for your child’s participation.
- The adults caring for your child will hold all mandatory security and medical clearances.
- Programs will be staffed appropriately to safely care for your child by following a mandated ratio of staff to children at all times, and ensure your child is always in sight.
- Programs will maintain a clean and secure facility and follow all current health and safety guidelines to ensure the health and wellbeing of your child.
- Programs will offer a developmentally appropriate environment for young children full of materials and toys that help your child learn.
- Programs will offer your child nutritious meals and/or snacks every day.

<sup>2</sup> If you believe your child may have a disability or developmental delay that impacts their ability to learn, first talk to your child’s program to find out if there are developmental and academic interventions to support your child within the general education setting. If strategies have been implemented and you feel your child may require special education services, your program can assist you in submitting an initial referral for an evaluation to the NYCDOE Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) to receive free special education services.

<sup>3</sup> A trauma-informed approach is where every individual in their program, regardless of title or role, will “realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery; recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seek to actively resist re-traumatization.” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.



## Teaching & Learning

*The DECE commits to supporting your child in play-based learning, exploration, and partnering with the whole family to ensure the goals you have for your child are incorporated into*

- Programs will use the following frameworks and standards to plan for your child’s learning in accordance with their age: [New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards](#) (NYSPLS) and the [Early Learning Outcomes Framework](#) (ELOF).
- Your child’s teaching team and program/network administrators will have the appropriate qualifications for their positions.
- Your child’s teaching team will provide your child with opportunities to celebrate their identity, explore their interests, and build a sense of community with their peers as they play and investigate the world around them.
- Programs will provide opportunities for your child to participate in large group, small group and independent experiences and physical activities, using a wide variety of learning materials.
- Programs will offer activities for you and your child to do together outside of the learning environment that build on their learning from the day.
- Programs will honor your family’s multilingualism and encourage you to speak together in the language you prefer.
- Programs will plan with you for your child’s transition into and out of the program.



## Program Operations

*The DECE commits to providing your family access to a free, full-day high-quality program.*

- There are a variety of programs for families to choose from:
  - “School Day and Year” programs will offer at least 176 days of instruction annually, for 6 hours and 20 minutes each day.
  - “Extended Day and Year” programs include Early Head Start, Head Start, and other extended day/year programs. These programs offer longer days (8 or 10 hours) and year-round services (225 days or 260 days).
- Programs will not collect fees for pre-registration or enrollment, or for instructional materials, school supplies, or special events. Programs funded by the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) charge a family fee, which is based on a sliding scale.
- Your family is not required to participate in any other programming offered by the provider in order to receive services offered by the NYC DOE.

 **Resources**

As advocates not only for your child, but also the communities in which you live, your voice is central to how your early childhood program meets the needs of your family and community. If you believe your child is not receiving high quality care and education, or you would like to offer us feedback, you can reach out to contacts in the following areas:

**General Family Resources**

**Enrollment**

**Special Education**

**Multilingual Learners**

**General Family Resources**

- Call the Parent Support Line (P311): Dial 311 and say “schools” or call (718) 935-2009. P311’s hours are Monday - Friday between 8 AM and 6 PM.
- Email the Senior Executive Director of Family Empowerment & Community Partnerships at [FCECP@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:FCECP@schools.nyc.gov) with your family engagement questions.
- Visit the [Early Childhood Learn at Home page](#) for remote learning resources and health and safety tips, as well as the general [Early Childhood page](#) for what to expect from all programs.
- Visit the [Early Childhood Family Toolkit](#) on Growing Up NYC for hand-picked resources to keep kids learning, playing, and growing healthy.
- Sign up for [Ready4K](#) to receive a free family engagement curriculum. Each week, you’ll receive short text messages with fun facts and easy tips on how to promote your child’s development by building on existing family routines. Text “NYC” to 70138.
- Find resources for [Students in Temporary Housing](#), such as public transportation support.
- Fill out this [Technical Support Form](#) to let us know what issues you have with DOE-issued iPads/devices, access to applications, and other technical problems.

**3-K, Pre-K, EarlyLearn, Kindergarten, & Gifted & Talented Enrollment**

- Children ages 0-2 can enroll year-round in EarlyLearn. Eligibility is based on your family’s income and needs. Learn more at [nyc.gov/EarlyLearn](http://nyc.gov/EarlyLearn).
- Each winter, the DOE collects admissions applications for the following school year. Families can participate in admissions processes for entry into 3-K, pre-K, kindergarten and Gifted & Talented programs.
- All NYC families can apply to:
  - **3-K** the year your child turns 3. Learn more at [nyc.gov/3K](http://nyc.gov/3K).
  - **Pre-K** the year your child turns 4. Learn more at [nyc.gov/preK](http://nyc.gov/preK).
  - **Kindergarten** the year your child turns 5. Learn more at [schools.nyc.gov/kindergarten](http://schools.nyc.gov/kindergarten).
  - **Gifted & Talented** admissions when their children are starting elementary schools. Learn more at [schools.nyc/GT](http://schools.nyc/GT).

- Sign up for emails to receive the most up to date information regarding each admissions process at [schools.nyc.gov/sign-up](https://schools.nyc.gov/sign-up).
- Visit the [Family Welcome Center \(FWC\) page](#) to get in contact with FWCs.
- Email the Early Childhood Enrollment team at [ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov) with your enrollment questions.

### Special Education Resources

- For children 0-3, if you are interested in making a referral to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Bureau for Early Intervention, you can call 311 and ask about Early Intervention or visit the [Early Intervention information for families page here](#).
  - You can also reach out to the DOE EI to Preschool team at [EltoPreschool@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:EltoPreschool@schools.nyc.gov) or 646-389-7171.
- General Special Education inquiries:
  - DOE Special Education Hotline: 718-935-2007
  - [SpecialEducation@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SpecialEducation@schools.nyc.gov)
- Related Services: [RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov)
- Assistive Technology: [CATpreschool@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:CATpreschool@schools.nyc.gov)
- Find the contact information for your district's [CPSE online here](#).
- To learn more about the how to access services for your child, you can review the:
  - [DOE Guide to the Early Intervention to Preschool Transition](#)
  - [The DOE Family Guide to Preschool Special Education Services](#)
  - [DOE's Moving to Preschool Page](#)

### Multilingual Learner Resources

- A child's home language is an integral cultural asset that should be honored, sustained, and reflected in the classroom and program environment. Learn about [your rights](#) as a parent of an English language learner.
- You have a right to receive information or communicate with a staff member at your child's program, Family Child Care Network, school, or Department of Education (DOE) office in your language. View [NYC Public Schools Speak Your Language](#) for more information.
- Read a [welcome flyer for Pre-K Emergent Multilingual Learner families](#) from the New York State Education Department.
- Find [Community-Based Organizations](#) that support linguistically and culturally diverse families.
- View [helpful links](#) for families of English language learners.