Bloomberg-Era Early Childhood Program Faces Uncertain Future

NEW YORK—With Mayor Bill de Blasio’s expanded prekindergarten program hiring hundreds of new early childhood teachers, a Bloomberg-era pre-K program serving thousands of children is facing an uncertain future.

EarlyLearn, launched in 2012, is a financially struggling early education program serving over 30,000 children, mostly 3- and 4-year-olds. One of its main selling points is its high-quality instructors, and the education they offer to low-income and working families.

The mayor said his pre-K expansion would require 2,000 new teachers, with 1,000 starting this September. EarlyLearn provides new or veteran teachers hiring for these jobs, as pre-K, especially the locations operated by the city’s Education Department (DOE), offer 30 to 40 percent higher salaries, shorter work hours, summer vacation, and other benefits.

In the DOE, providers were allowed to keep up morale for the rest. We’ve lost two teachers to the DOE so far, and counting,” said Takiema Bunche-Smith, vice president of education at Brooklyn Kindergarten Society.

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Source: Office of the Mayor

NYC PRE-K TIMELINE

December 2013
De Blasio announces 97 percent recruitment for 10,400 new pre-K seats at Community Based Organizations.

January 27, 2014
City releases plan for universal pre-K for 40-year-olds.

March 23
De Blasio announces recruitment and training for pre-K teachers.

April 1
State allocates $100 million for city’s pre-K expansion.

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Department of Education announces a 40 percent jump in pre-K teacher applications compared to the previous year, close to 700.

April 2
The mayor announces over 4,500 new pre-K seats in public schools.

April 3
City launches a media campaign to boost pre-K enrollment.

May 27
De Blasio announces the opening of applications for 1,500 new pre-K seats at Community Based Organizations.

May 30
The mayor announces 1,440 new pre-K seats at Community Based Organizations.

June 5
De Blasio announces 97 percent of public school-based pre-K seats are filled.

To match salaries and health benefits of public schools would cost an additional $500 million a year.

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Children in EarlyLearn’s (pre-Kindergarten) class recite the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the school day at Staford Elementary School in Tacoma, Wash.

Source: Office of the Mayor