

Evaluation of the New York City *Pre-K for All* Initiative, 2014–15

Implementation Study Report: Expansion Rollout



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Pre-K for All 2014-15 Evaluation Response Memo

Pre-K for All is New York City's historic initiative to provide every four-year-old with access to free, full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten through a two-year expansion that began in the 2014-15 school year. Before Pre-K for All, only 19,287 four-year-olds were enrolled in full-day pre-K in New York City; as of the 2015-16 school year, enrollment was 68,647.

The City implemented the rapid, at-scale universal pre-K program within a short two-year timeframe because filling the gap in access to full-day pre-K was crucial—four-year-olds eligible to enroll in September 2014 would not get another chance to attend pre-K. The City secured funding and quickly began to prepare for the 2014-15 school year. In the summer of 2014, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and partner agencies worked closely with pre-K providers to ensure they were ready to open their doors on the first day of school. At the same time, the City launched an unprecedented grassroots campaign to recruit and enroll families. This included establishing an Outreach Team of dedicated pre-K enrollment specialists to call families and canvas local communities.

The City's comprehensive approach was grounded in creating a sustainable, high-quality, full-day pre-K model. From its inception, the expansion focused not only on ensuring access but also on investing in pre-K quality. The City built a single system of free, full-day, high-quality pre-K and developed a quality infrastructure to support long-term sustainability and quality improvements. The DOE's model provides all pre-K programs with differentiated support at the classroom- and program-level that focuses on implementing research-based instructional and family engagement practices. Some examples include: free and targeted professional learning for leaders, lead teachers, assistant teachers, and paraprofessionals; on-site support for leaders and teachers from Instructional Coordinators (ICs) and Social Workers (SWs); and guidance through online tools and other resources.

The first year of the expansion marked the beginning of a rigorous two-part research study of this work. The DOE, in conjunction with the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, collaborated with Westat, Metis Associates, and Branch Associates, with supplemental support from the New York University's Institute for Human Development and Social Change, to undertake a study to inform future years of program delivery as well as lay the foundation for long-term research in the future. The Year 1 evaluation of Pre-K for All included an evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation process and a snapshot of student learning in the first year of the Pre-K for All initiative.

This memo summarizes the findings of the Year 1 evaluation of Pre-K for All and concludes by outlining accomplishments and improvements made in the 2015-16 school year that address many of the report findings.

Year 1 Evaluation Overview

The analysis conducted over the course of the 2014-15 school year was based on surveys, focus groups, interviews, and assessment data from a variety of stakeholders including parents, teachers, principals, site directors, DOE staff, and staff from other City agencies. The evaluation covered seven areas of Pre-K for All's implementation and are captured in separate reports:

1. Family perceptions of the program
2. Family engagement and communication

3. Curriculum and instruction
4. Using data for programmatic and instructional purposes
5. Expansion rollout
6. Program supports
7. Executive functioning and academic skills

Overall, the studies found:

- 92 percent of surveyed parents rate the quality of their child’s pre-K program as “good” or “excellent” and 83 percent of surveyed parents report that Pre-K for All improved their child’s learning and behavior “a lot.”
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report using a variety of family engagement and communication practices.
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report that they feel supported by the DOE in implementing curriculum.
- Sites offering Pre-K for All report using a wide variety of data to inform instruction and make programmatic decisions.
- Most providers that applied to offer free, full-day Pre-K for All report that the application process was clear and well-supported.
- Nearly 80 percent and 88 percent of site leaders report that staff recruitment and staff retention, respectively, did not pose significant challenges.
- A majority of site leaders and teachers report using each type of support provided by the DOE (*ex: coaching, professional development, etc.*). In general, Pre-K for All sites report that these supports are helpful.
- A positive impact on students—across income levels, race, and home language status—was seen through their gains in executive functioning skills and academic skills over the course of the study period.

Year 1 Evaluation Report Summaries

1. Report on Family Perceptions

- 92 percent of surveyed families rate the quality of their child’s pre-K program as “good” or “excellent,” and 83 percent report that Pre-K for All improved their child’s learning and behavior “a lot.”
- Nearly 80 percent of surveyed families report receiving resources from their Pre-K for All program to support learning at home.
- Families report that the availability of Pre-K for All affected decisions about child care and labor force participation.
 - Of the families that were surveyed, more than half (56 percent) report a decrease in spending on childcare from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Surveyed families report an average decrease of \$78 per week in spending.
 - Of the families that reported that Pre-K for All affected the number of hours they worked, half report an increase in hours worked, which they attribute to the availability of full-day pre-K.

2. Report on Family Engagement and Communication

- Overall, sites report undertaking a variety of family engagement and communication practices as a component of Pre-K for All. These include, but are not limited to: using face-to-face communication, providing updates on students’ achievements, having accessible program staff and multi-lingual staff, translating communications, using family input to make decisions, and providing opportunities for families to be involved with the program.
- Survey and interview findings also demonstrate that site leaders and instructional staff express a commitment to involving families in the education of their children.

3. Report on Curriculum and Instruction

- Overall, Pre-K for All sites report using a range of curricula to meet the needs of their students and that curriculum satisfaction is high among staff.
- The large majority of site staff report that their curriculum is vertically aligned to kindergarten and beyond, either to a moderate or large extent.
- Pre-K for All sites report using their curricula effectively and confidently to meet students' needs; however, program staff also report requests for continued training and support to improve quality.

4. Report on Use of Data for Programmatic and Instructional Purposes

- Overall, Pre-K for All sites report using a wide range of data to inform site-level programmatic decisions and classroom-level teaching practices, which include: authentic assessments of children's learning, program quality assessments, and feedback from DOE support staff and families.
- Authentic assessment data is a valuable data source for children's learning and development and 89 percent of sites report using these data for a variety of purposes. However, sites' perceived comfort with the authentic assessment systems vary by site type.
- 89 percent of site leaders report that their site uses data to engage families to a moderate or large extent.

5. Report on Pre-K for All Expansion Rollout

- Most providers that applied to offer full-day pre-K report that the application process was clear, easy to navigate, and well-supported. In general, sites report understanding how to be in compliance with DOE and Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) expectations.
- Key stakeholders report that the engagement of a large number of key players and City agencies, increases in City agency capacity and infrastructure, and collaboration within and between City agencies, demonstrated a high-level of commitment to reach the initiative's goals and were major successes.
- Nearly 80 percent and 88 percent of site leaders report that staff recruitment and staff retention, respectively, did not pose significant challenges.
- On average, lead teachers report having five years of experience in a pre-K educational setting and almost 13 years in any educational setting. Approximately eight out of every ten lead teachers report having the NYS Early Childhood certification and almost all of those who did not have certification were currently pursuing it.
- Overall, the large majority of surveyed pre-K instructional staff report being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their pre-K teaching experience in 2014-15.

6. Report on Program Supports

- A majority of site leaders and teachers report receiving or using each type of support provided by the DOE (*ex: coaching, professional development, etc.*), and a majority also report that each type of support was "moderately" or "very" helpful.
- Nearly all site leaders (96 percent) report that they or their staff participated in the DOE-sponsored training that took place four times during the year. Overall, the large majority of site leaders and instructional staff (80 percent) report finding each of these professional development opportunities to be helpful.

- Sites report using a variety of resources and materials to support implementation of their Pre-K for All program. Nearly all site leaders (96 percent) report that their site used the DOE website to access units of study, lesson plans, and guidelines for the daily schedule, among other resources. They report the website is useful.

7. Report on Executive Functioning and Academic Skills

- A unique feature of this study is the collection of data on children’s executive functioning skills, a set of skills that includes their inhibitory control, working memory, and ability to shift between pieces of information, that together support children’s self-regulation. Executive functioning skills were measured by two widely-used assessments known as the Pencil Tap task and the Hearts and Flowers task.
- Statistically significant fall-to-spring gains were observed in both measures of executive functioning. The gains in the percentage of correct responses in the Pencil Tap and Hearts and Flowers tasks were 10 percent and 18 percent, respectively.
- Children attending Pre-K for All made statistically significant gains across all academic skills (Letter Recognition, Pre-writing, and Early Math) over the course of a 5.5-month testing window. By the end of this time period, Pre-K for All children outpaced the learning of four-year-olds nationally and were classified as being in the average range across all academic skills.
- This study featured a pre-post design without a comparison group, which means that observed gains in child learning cannot be attributed solely to participation in Pre-K for All. Children naturally learn and develop over time, and the study design means that these gains are confounded with the effects of the Pre-K for All program. Therefore, we cannot estimate the extent to which Pre-K for All was responsible for the children’s learning and development.

2015-16 | Year 2

Updates

The accomplishments and improvements in the second year of the expansion build on the work done in Year 1 to develop a high quality Pre-K for All system. They were informed by the results from the 2014-15 evaluation of Pre-K for All, feedback from Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) field staff, ongoing program assessments, and partnerships with early childhood education experts.

In the second year of the expansion, the DOE introduced the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards (PQS), which define the DOE’s vision for high-quality Pre-K for All programs in NYC. The PQS describes the key practices of family engagement, rigorous and developmentally appropriate instruction, professional collaboration, and leadership that support children in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the [NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core \(NYS PKFCC\)](#). The PQS establishes a shared set of expectations for all pre-K programs; the DOE, leaders, educators, and families all use the PQS to understand and advance program quality.

EXPANSION AND POLICY

- The 2015-16 school year marked the first time that every four-year-old in New York City had access to free, full-day, pre-K. As of the 2015-16 school year, 68,647 children were enrolled across all Pre-K for All programs—a number more than triple the number of children who were enrolled before the expansion and larger than the entire school population of major cities like Boston. Enrollment is high across every community, with the highest participation among low-income families.

- The DOE introduced a streamlined pre-K enrollment process for families, which provides one application for families to apply to pre-K programs. Overall, 88 percent of families received a pre-K offer to one of their top three choices through the new streamlined application process.
- The DOE developed and shared critical policy guidance for NYC Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) to ensure they are adequately supported as they join or continue as Pre-K for All partners.

DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORTS: In 2015-16, the DOE continued to advance its differentiated supports to all programs, tailoring support to each program’s needs in order to meet Pre-K for All’s Program Quality Standards.

Instructional Tracks and Lanes

- The DOE launched its Pre-K for All Instructional Tracks, providing every pre-K site with differentiated professional learning through a Summer Institute for teachers and leaders and a series of four teacher sessions and three leader sessions during the school year. Based on a variety of factors such as interest, demonstrated need, recommendations from Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers, site quality, and geography, sites were selected to participate in one of the following professional learning tracks and lanes:
 - NYC Pre-K Explore: Pre-K sites that participated in the Explore track used the evidence-based Building Blocks math curriculum together with the Pre-K for All Interdisciplinary Units of Study. Paired together, these materials provide a comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate approach to learning in pre-K.
 - Advancing Social Emotional Development: Pre-K sites in this lane advanced ways to support pre-K learners in developing social emotional skills needed to build a positive sense of self, form positive relationships, self-regulate, and adapt to change.
 - Using Data to Inform Instruction: Pre-K sites in this lane moved each child forward by learning new strategies to identify and meet each learner’s needs, using authentic assessments and other data points.
 - Supporting Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Learners: In this lane, pre-K sites built on the diverse backgrounds and languages children and families brought to the classroom, with strategies for developing learning environments in which all children can thrive and all families are strong partners.

Coaching

- The DOE expanded its cadre of staff to provide on-site support to programs, including Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers.
- To more effectively differentiate support, in the 2015-16 school year, Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers conducted over 1,800 Foundational Support Visits (FSVs) to pre-K sites. Instructional Coordinators and Social Workers used information from these initial visits, ongoing observations, and pre-K program quality assessments to tailor their supports.
- The DOE established partnerships to provide specialized coaching for programs in targeted areas such as the Building Blocks math curriculum and using data to inform instruction.

Interdisciplinary Units of Study

- The DOE created the Pre-K for All research-based Interdisciplinary Units of Study to support student learning in all domains using developmentally appropriate practice. Throughout the year, the DOE released ten interdisciplinary units grounded in the NYS PKFCC.

PROGRAM MEASUREMENT AND USE OF DATA

- Because of its commitment to consistent quality measurement through program assessments, the DOE increased its capacity to provide more frequent program assessments, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R), and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). The DOE committed to a three-year cycle for each assessment by the 2016-17 school year for ECERS-R and the 2017-18 school year for CLASS.

OTHER KEY INITIATIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

- The DOE partnered with researchers at New York University to develop a system of differentiated support that utilizes data on program needs and quality levels; the purpose of this system is to make decisions about the supports each program in our system receives across various aspects of the Pre-K Quality Standards. This is part of an ongoing partnership between DECE and NYU.
- In 2015-2016, the DECE continued its partnership with the Office of Special Education to develop resources and professional learning opportunities so that Instructional Coordinators, Social Workers, teachers, and leaders further strengthen their work to ensure that all children are successfully supported in achieving high expectations for their learning and developmental progress.
- The DOE launched a historic Teacher Incentive Program to support NYCEECs in recruiting and retaining top talent. Through the Pre-K for All Lead Teacher Incentive Program, there are two types signing incentives for certified lead teachers in Pre-K for All classrooms: the Retention Incentive Program for returning certified lead teachers and the New Hire Incentive Program for newly-hired certified lead teachers.

YEAR 2 EVALUATION

The Year 2 evaluation will produce actionable findings that will inform how the DOE can support pre-K programs to advance student learning. The Year 2 evaluation seeks to inform:

- How programs can better support students of different backgrounds and needs and how differentiated supports can serve students with special needs, students whose home language is a language other than English, and students living in poverty.
- The impact of the Pre-K for All's coaching models and professional development to understand how well the DOE is targeting sites for the right kinds and dosage of support based on the areas of growth identified in Year 1 and the Foundational Support Visit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	i
Introduction	1
Site Recruitment and Preparation	2
Agency Capacity	3
Site Recruitment Process	4
Stakeholders' Perceptions of Successes and Challenges	5
Site Leaders' Views of the Application and Preparation Process	6
Staffing	12
Staff Recruitment	12
Staff Qualifications	16
Staff Satisfaction	20
Family Recruitment	21
Outreach Supports	21
Site Leaders' Views on Family Recruitment	22
Site Leaders' Need for Recruitment and Enrollment Support	24
Considerations for Future Expansion and Consequences for City Agencies	25
Appendix	27

Pre-K for All Evaluation Expansion Rollout

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westat, Metis Associates, and Branch Associates are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the *Pre-K for All* initiative in New York City to assess the implementation and outcomes of this effort. As a demonstration of its commitment to learning and quality improvement, the City—the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and the New York City Department of Education (DOE), in cooperation with the New York City Administration for Children’s Services (ACS)—undertook this evaluation beginning in 2014 as a means of gaining actionable information that will inform implementation. Work in this area is expected to continue into the future.

This report presents implementation findings on the topic of the expansion rollout from the perspective of *Pre-K for All* site administrators and instructional staff as well as interviews with key

City agency staff and a survey of DOE Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) staff. Sources of data include surveys of site administrators and instructional staff from a sample of 201 sites and in-depth interviews with administrators and staff at 40 of these sites, as well as a review of available documentation. The sites included in the study were sampled to be representative of all *Pre-K for All* sites and recruited to participate in the evaluation. Findings are based on self-reported data; observations of programs were not conducted. Survey response rates were 91 percent for site administrators and 69 percent for instructional staff.

In addition to presenting survey and interview findings across all study sites, selected data are reported for the following subgroups of programs and respondents:

- **Site type.** This includes three categories, two of which include programs known as New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) operated by independent organizations under contract to DOE (DOE NYCEECs) or ACS (ACS NYCEECs). The third category is district schools. Because of the small sample size, results for charter schools are not presented separately, but are included in the aggregate.
- **Program length.** All *Pre-K for All* sites operate full-day programs. In this report, sites are categorized as “existing or expanded” (full-day program that maintained their same size enrollment or expanded the number of seats), “conversion” (programs that converted from a half to a full day), and “new or newly contracted” (district schools or NYCEECs operating a pre-K program for the first time as well as programs in existence for various lengths of time prior to contracting with the DOE or ACS).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. *What were effective expansion rollout strategies and practices? What worked well? What was most challenging? What suggestions do providers have to improve the rollout efforts?*
 - a) *Site recruitment and preparation, including application process, supports, and communication*
 - b) *Staff recruitment, qualifications, and satisfaction*
 - c) *Family recruitment*
2. *What can we learn from the rollout of the program about how to improve future expansion? What are the consequences at the city agency level that must be managed as the Pre-K for All effort unfolds?*

- **Staff position.** This includes site leaders (i.e., school administrators or site directors), lead teachers, and teacher assistants who may be teacher aides or paraprofessionals.

This report presents evaluation findings in the following areas: site recruitment and preparation, staffing, family recruitment, and considerations for future expansion and consequences for city agencies.

SITE RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION

The expansion of pre-kindergarten in the fall of 2014 was a historic citywide effort that involved City Hall, divisions of DOE, ACS, and several other city agencies. To prepare, agency capacity was expanded in order to undertake an extensive family outreach and recruitment effort and to increase the number of full-day pre-K programs, as well as to provide support to these programs.

The Pre-K for All initiative successfully met the first year's goal of providing full-day pre-K to over 53,000 students by the fall of 2014.

The ambitious nature and scale of the *Pre-K for All* initiative was identified by stakeholders as one of its greatest successes. Major successes of the initiative described by stakeholders were:

- Meeting the goal of providing full-day pre-K to over 53,000 students;
- Engaging a large number of key players and city agencies, demonstrating a high level of commitment to reaching the initiative's goals;
- Increasing city agency capacity and infrastructure, developing linkages and collaborations within and between the agencies, and building out the necessary supports and monitoring processes;
- Creating seats in high-needs neighborhoods prioritized by the DOE.¹

I have been around city government for a while and I have never seen that many agencies really come together and get something like this done.... It was a very coordinated effort, and everyone was so dedicated to making sure it happened.... The way that people came together, the way that people worked together, that was really amazing.

Agency Stakeholder

The site administrators' perceptions of the process included the following:

- **Most providers that applied for full-day pre-K found the process of applying to become a *Pre-K for All* site to be clear, easy to navigate, and supportive.** However, compared to other types of sites, ACS NYCEEC sites and conversion sites reported more difficulty *understanding* the application requirements. Conversion sites were also more likely to report difficulty *navigating* the site application process.
- **In general, sites indicated that they understood how to be in compliance with the DOE requirements and—for NYCEECs—with Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)**

¹ In 2014–15, the DOE prioritized a number of “high-needs” areas during the *Pre-K for All* site application process. High-need areas were identified by the DOE based on one or more of the following factors: low student achievement in elementary schools based on proficiency on state exams, percentage of children not attending a pre-K program the year before kindergarten, pre-K seat-need gap (fewer seats available than kindergarten seats), high utilization of existing pre-K programs, and/or sites located within a New York City Housing Authority building.

regulations, although some sites, newly contracted sites in particular, noted some challenges in this area.

Many sites, particularly the newly contracted sites and DOE NYCEECs, indicated they encountered **more challenges with internal budgeting and operations** than with other aspects of applying and gearing up for the school year. Dealing with contractual issues with the DOE was also challenging for some NYCEECs.

- Interviewed site leaders were appreciative of the various types of support they received from DOE while gearing up for the 2014–15 school year, which included help with budgeting, adhering to DOE and DOHMH compliance regulations, as well as applying for dual-language programming for the 2015–16 school year.
- In preparing for program operations, DOE NYCEEC sites reported needing the most additional support in budgeting and program operations and dealing with DOE contractual issues. District schools also identified internal budgeting and operations as an area for additional support, whereas ACS NYCEECs reported needing the most additional support with understanding how to be in DOE compliance.²

Suggestions for Consideration Related to Site Recruitment and Preparation

- Ensure that sites are aware of all available support systems when they are notified of their selection, but streamline communications so administrators do not become overwhelmed with information from various sources.
- Provide more information to sites about expectations for high-quality programs, including required materials and equipment and classroom setup.
- Provide additional trainings to newly contracted sites on the operational and business-related aspects of *Pre-K for All*.
- Identify a pool of high-quality sites that new program applicants can visit to observe and learn what great programming looks like; a mentoring program between existing and new sites could be implemented for more sustained support and inter-visitations.

STAFFING

Staff Recruitment and Retention

As a result of the expansion efforts, 1,000 new lead teachers were hired for full-day classrooms for the 2014–15 school year. Within and outside of DOE there were efforts to ensure that sites—particularly newly contracted sites—would have access to a pool of qualified candidates from which to staff their programs.

According to several interviewed key stakeholders, the DOE **Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality** played an instrumental role in helping sites recruit staff once they were accepted into the program and

² Different types of sites received supports from different offices. DOE NYCEECs relied primarily on supports provided by DECE, whereas district schools received supports from various offices within DOE. ACS NYCEECs received supports from ACS and DECE, depending on the topic.

developed successful strategies to attract staff (website, webinars, focus groups) and facilitate matches with sites (hiring events).

Staff recruitment and retention did not pose significant challenges for many of the *Pre-K for All* sites.

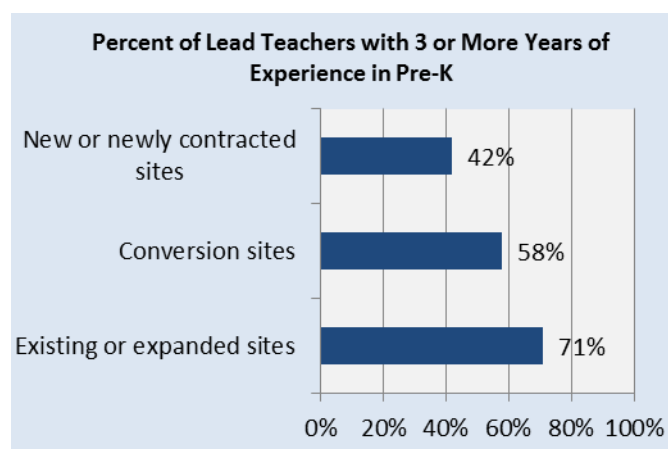
The large majority of site leaders reported experiencing either no challenges or minimal challenges in recruiting and hiring staff (79 percent) or retaining staff (88 percent).

Nevertheless, **ACS NYCEEC sites, and to a lesser extent DOE NYCEEC sites, were more likely than district school sites to report at least moderate challenges** with recruiting and hiring staff. Staff identified disparities between pre-K teachers employed at NYCEECs and district school sites,³ as well as greater access by district schools to the pool of candidates (for example through the Teacher Finder Tool), as factors that made staff recruitment more challenging for NYCEECs. In addition, some site leaders noted that the compressed timeframe between contract execution and the start of the school year created a recruitment challenge.

NYCEECs received support from the DOE Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality to ensure they were ready for the first day of school by providing extensive recruitment and staffing support over the summer. Additionally, the DOE encouraged NYCEECs to pay competitive salaries, and in the first year of expansion, the DOE took extra steps to increase pay for pre-K teachers across the unified system, as part of the expansion of *Pre-K for All*. The goal was to move toward parity wherever possible by enacting changes that allowed interested NYCEECs to increase annual pay for lead teachers by opting into higher salary levels for certified teachers.

Staff Qualifications and Experience

All lead teachers have at least a BA, and are either certified or on a study plan for full certification. District school teachers are all certified. Survey results show that **approximately 8 out of every 10 lead teachers who completed a survey indicated having the NYS Early Childhood certification, and almost all who did not were pursuing certification at the time of the survey.** Lead teachers at district schools were considerably more likely than teachers at the NYCEECs to report having this type of certification. Similarly, lead teachers in existing or expanded sites were considerably more likely to have NYS early childhood certification than lead teachers in new or newly contracted, or conversion sites.



On average, surveyed lead teachers reported 5 years of experience in a pre-K educational setting and almost 13 years in any educational setting. However, a considerable proportion of instructional staff—particularly those teaching in a new or newly contracted site—were relatively new to teaching at the

³ It should be noted that the city has made a concerted effort to address salary inequities, for example by securing state funds to provide more competitive salaries for full-day pre-K teachers at NYCEECs.

pre-K level. For example, more than half (58 percent) of surveyed lead teachers at new or newly contracted sites have been teaching in a pre-K classroom for fewer than three years.

A key **partnership with City University of New York’s Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (CUNY PDI) was leveraged to create a pipeline for high-quality pre-K teachers.** The Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project provided two expedited certification pathways for early childhood professionals who committed to teach a minimum of two years in a full-day pre-K classroom. The partnership allowed for up to 400 participants in 2014–15.

Staff Satisfaction

Overall, the large majority (87 percent) of surveyed instructional staff across all surveyed sites (and 96 percent of district school staff) reported being *satisfied or very satisfied* with their pre-K teaching experience. Furthermore, almost all (96 percent) of surveyed staff reported that they planned to continue teaching in New York City. The most common source of dissatisfaction among teachers at NYCEECs was the disparity between teachers employed in programs operating under different funding streams and between teachers at NYCEECs and district schools.

I have loved every minute of my job this year. As a pre-K teacher, I am able to see every day how I make a difference in my students’ lives and that motivates me to be the best I can be for them.

Pre-K is a crucial time in a child’s life and I feel this program gets them off and running for their kindergarten experience.

Pre-K Teachers

Suggestions for Consideration Related to Staffing

- Continue to engage key agencies and city officials in finding ways to address the salary and benefit differentials between district school and NYCEEC teachers, and—within NYCEECs—teachers who are paid from different funding streams.
- Intensify efforts to support staff recruitment—particularly among new sites and NYCEECs—by expanding the DOE activities that were cited by key city agency stakeholders as successful practices (e.g., webinars, information sessions, and “meet and greets” where site directors can meet candidates).
- Provide more lead time between executing contracts and the start of the school year so that site leaders have more time to recruit and hire staff.
- Continue the Pre-kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project to allow additional teachers an opportunity to obtain their Birth to Grade 2 teaching certification, thus adding qualified teachers to the workforce.

FAMILY RECRUITMENT

A dedicated outreach team, created under DECE and in close partnership with the Office of the Mayor, oversaw and facilitated family recruitment for the *Pre-K for All* initiative. The outreach team’s recruitment methods included automated and in-person telephone calls to eligible families, face-to-face

neighborhood canvassing, the distribution of informational materials with the support of community partners, citywide media and press coverage, texting campaigns, mass mailings, and word of mouth. Family recruitment efforts were also supported by DOE instructional coordinators, DOE operation analysts, the Office of Student Enrollment, and the Mayor’s Press Office.

For many sites, family recruitment was a straightforward and successful process; there was either a high demand for pre-K programming within a community or a limited number of programs within a neighborhood from which families could choose.

- Sites reported using a variety of strategies to recruit families, such as posting informational flyers, face-to-face outreach in parks and community organizations, and open houses.
- However, **some NYCEEC site leaders—especially at the ACS NYCEEC sites—reported struggling with family recruitment**, in part because they felt they had to compete with district school programs.
- Almost a third (30 percent) of surveyed site leaders indicated a need for additional support with student recruitment and enrollment. NYCEEC site leaders reported needing more assistance in these areas than district school site leaders.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE EXPANSION AND CONSEQUENCES FOR CITY AGENCIES

The *Pre-K for All* initiative was an inter-agency effort that **successfully engaged a very large number of key players and city agencies**. **Changes to the internal infrastructure and capacity** of key city agencies—and in particular the DOE—and the **development of collaborations** between and within agencies were noted as two of the most important accomplishments. Agency stakeholders and DECE staff identified the following areas for consideration in future expansion:

- **Awareness.** Continue to raise awareness of the initiative, emphasizing, in particular, that all sites follow the same guidelines, rules, and expectations.
- **Site application and support.** Conduct additional needs assessments to better identify high-priority areas of the city, as well as areas that may be saturated (i.e., where there is a high number of seats available compared to the number of pre-K-aged children). Expand supports for program start-up to ensure that sites, particularly new sites, are ready by the beginning of the school year.
- **Staff recruitment.** Continue to strengthen the teacher pipeline, for example by supporting the development or continuation of early childhood certification pathway programs such as the Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project. The DOE should also continue to provide supports to sites around staff recruitment, such as those offered in Year 1 by the Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality.
- **Family outreach and recruitment.** Continue to use strategies that were reported to be particularly successful in Year 1, including market research techniques to inform outreach strategies, dedicated outreach team to support sites in recruiting families, and a citywide community awareness campaign.
- **Financial commitment.** To ensure the success and sustainability of the *Pre-K for All* initiative, continue to address the inequities stemming from teacher salary differentials between NYCEECs and district schools.

INTRODUCTION

Westat and Metis are conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the *Pre-K for All* initiative in New York City to assess the implementation and outcomes of this effort. The implementation study consists of an ongoing assessment of New York City's *Pre-K for All* expansion efforts, both in terms of processes, structures, and policies that are in place to support and monitor the rapid expansion, as well as on-the-ground program implementation and delivery. Results from this study will help identify successful practices, challenges, and areas for growth.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. *What were effective expansion rollout strategies and practices? What worked well? What was most challenging? What suggestions do providers have to improve the rollout efforts?*
 - *Site recruitment and preparation, including application process, compliance, and supports*
 - *Staff recruitment, qualifications, and satisfaction*
 - *Family recruitment*
2. *What can we learn from the rollout of the program about how to improve future expansion? What are the consequences at the city agency level that must be managed as the UPK effort unfolds?*

The implementation study uses multiple methods and data sources, including interviews with key agency stakeholders; a survey of staff of the NYC Department of Education (DOE) Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE); surveys of site administrators, instructional staff, and families at a sample of sites and interviews with administrators and staff at a sub-sample of these sites; and a review of documentation. The evaluation instruments were developed by Westat/Metis in collaboration with staff of the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) and DOE.

This report presents implementation findings on the topic of the **expansion rollout, including site recruitment and preparation, staffing, and family recruitment, as well as considerations for future expansion**. Findings are based on self-reported survey and interview responses as well as a review of documentation provided by DOE.

In February and March, 2015, **interviews were conducted with 43 stakeholders** identified by DOE and CEO as having played a key role in overseeing and supporting the expansion efforts. They represented the following agencies: DOE, City Hall, CEO, ACS, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Department of Buildings (DOB), the Department of Design and Construction (DDC), and the Fire Department (FDNY). Representatives of Accenture, a consulting firm, and a Scientific Advisory Council, a group of experts convened by CEO, also participated in interviews.

Also in February, Westat/Metis administered an **online survey to all DECE staff**. A total of 159 staff completed the survey, representing a 75 percent response rate. Respondents included 57 instructional coordinators, 30 social workers, 19 central office staff, 17 operations staff, 16 outreach team members, 14 field office leadership staff, and 5 other staff.⁴

The program sites were sampled to be representative of all *Pre-K for All* sites and recruited to participate in the evaluation. A total of 201 sites agreed to participate in various aspects of the study, with 40 agreeing to site visits.

⁴ "Other" staff included two administrative assistants, one community coordinator, a field office staff, and a respondent who held multiple positions over the school year.

- From March through June, 2015, Westat/Metis administered an **online survey⁵ to site administrators and instructional staff** (teachers and teacher assistants). A total of 183 administrators responded, for a response rate of 91 percent. The response rate for instructional staff was 69 percent ($N = 742$) based on email addresses provided for 1,080 staff at the selected sites.
- **Site visits** were conducted at 40 programs from March to May 2015. In-depth interviews with site leaders and interviews or focus groups with instructional staff were conducted at each of these sites.

In addition to presenting survey and interview findings across all study sites, selected data are reported for the following subgroups of programs and respondents:

- **Site type.** This includes three categories, two of which include programs known as New York City Early Education Centers (NYCEECs) operated by independent organizations under contract to DOE (DOE NYCEECs) or ACS (ACS NYCEECs). The third category is district schools. Because of the small sample size, results for charter schools are not presented separately, but are included in the aggregate.
- **Program length.** All *Pre-K for All* sites operate full-day programs. In this report, sites are categorized as: “existing or expanded” (full-day program that maintained their same size enrollment or expanded the number of seats), “conversion” (programs that converted from a half to a full day), and “new or newly contracted” (district schools or NYCEECs operating a pre-K program for the first time as well as programs in existence for various lengths of time prior to contracting with the DOE or ACS).
- **Staff position.** This includes site leaders (i.e., school administrators or site directors), lead teachers, and teacher assistants who may be teacher aides or paraprofessionals.

See Appendix Table A-1 for the distribution of sites that participated in the study.

Drawing from the above data sources and evaluation activities, this report presents findings related to site recruitment and preparation, staffing, family recruitment, and considerations for future expansion and consequences for city agencies.

SITE RECRUITMENT AND PREPARATION

This section of the report begins with a description of the expansion efforts and the role of key city agencies in supporting these efforts, followed by stakeholders’ perceptions of site recruitment successes and challenges and providers’ views on the application and preparation process.

The *Pre-K for All* initiative is an extremely ambitious project that has the potential to change the lives of children and families across the city. **The nature and scale of this initiative** were

As a result of the expansion efforts, the number of sites offering full-time pre-K grew from 567 in the prior year to 1,408, while the number of students enrolled in full-time pre-K almost tripled (from 19,300 to more than 53,000).

⁵ To increase response rates, paper surveys were mailed to non-respondents in June.

identified by many as one of the greatest successes; it sparked a citywide conversation about early childhood education. With a first-year goal of enrolling over 53,000 children in full-day pre-K, the expansion was a citywide effort that involved City Hall, divisions of DOE, ACS, and several other city agencies.

AGENCY CAPACITY

To accomplish this historic expansion, the capacity of multiple city agencies was expanded to undertake extensive family outreach and recruitment, to increase the number of pre-K sites, as well as to provide support to these programs.

City Hall (Office of the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives) had a formal convening role and served as a point of contact for the initiative. In addition, DECE created an outreach team that worked closely with the Office of the Mayor to oversee family recruitment efforts. The team included a director, field manager, eight borough leads, 32 family enrollment specialists, 20 case managers, and 6 staff to manage data and work with providers. In February 2015, case managers from the outreach team were added to DECE field operations team to help prepare sites for the second year of the initiative.

Through competitive bidding, a consultant firm was hired in the spring of 2014 to provide support, identify issues, and develop a structure to resolve them. Four work streams were developed: facilities and site identification, enrollment and outreach, workforce development, and monitoring and evaluation. Within the Deputy Mayor's office, the CEO, which co-chaired the monitoring and evaluation work group, benefited from the assignment of an Urban Fellow.

Within the DOE, various aspects of the expansion resided in the DECE.

- The DECE grew from a small office to a "division." In the first year of *Pre-K for All*, DECE's field office increased from 160 to 300 staff, with additional subsequent expansion. The majority of the new positions, located in three borough-based field offices, were instructional coordinators (coaches providing support to sites on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment); programmatic social workers who build the capacity of sites in family engagement, social emotional development, and behavioral supports; operations managers and analysts who work on facilities and contracting; and quality assurance and assessment staff.
- A DECE chief of staff position was redesigned to lead operation work for the division and support the division's Chief Executive Officer. The Chief of Staff oversees DECE staff responsible for Pre-K Expansion, Policy, Performance, Data/Analytics, Budget, Human Resources, Field Operations and Communications/Press Strategy, and the DECE teams (each led by an executive director).
- Oversight for pre-K programmatic operations was divided into Field Operations (NYCEEC program oversight and support) and Expansion, Policy, and Performance. Additionally, administrative operations were incorporated within the division to oversee financial and grant management, human resources, contracts and procurement, and special projects.
- A Data and Analytics team expanded from one data manager to a team of staff, and other DECE teams added a data point person to support the work.
- Several other DOE offices expanded to a smaller extent. These included Student Enrollment (1.5 FT positions) and Teacher Recruitment and Quality, which used existing staff along with two consultants and 8 to 10 temporary staff over the summer of 2014. DOE's Research and Policy

Support Group also expanded its capacity through the hiring of an evaluation manager for the initiative.

Within ACS, pre-K expansion was situated within ACS EarlyLearn programs, part of Early Care and Education. Although no new positions were created, existing positions were assigned to the effort, including an associate commissioner, director of education, instructional specialists, and field staff.

The involvement of other agencies is described as part of the site recruitment process.

SITE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The site recruitment process included the development of the request for proposals (RFP), the process of sharing information about the RFP with potential applicants, the application process itself, and the period of preparation between the announcement of contract awards and the first day of programming in the fall of 2014.

Site recruitment was supported by several agencies and inter-agency teams. In particular, a dedicated workgroup on permitting and site readiness was created to provide oversight of the entire process. This workgroup was composed of representatives from each agency that needed to approve a site before it could enroll children (such as the DOE, DOHMH, and FDNY). The workgroup also included agencies dedicated to helping small businesses (e.g., Department of Small Business Services and the New Business Acceleration Team), since many of the applications were submitted by organizations or businesses created for the *Pre-K for All* initiative.

The DECE expansion team, described above, was responsible for developing the RFP, evaluating applicants (including vetting schools), and identifying potential classroom space for new and expanding programs.

Various units of DOE supported the site recruitment process in critical ways by providing the day-to-day support and management of the process.⁶

- The Office of Student Enrollment provided data on demand trends, which were used to allocate pre-K seats to existing programs and determine in which neighborhoods newly contracted sites should be situated. According to one interviewed stakeholder, the Office of Student Enrollment provided *very targeted demand data for districts and zones...where there seems to be a need for additional pre-K sites, where we haven't filled seats in the past. So we don't actually select the sites. We give the information to help [the Division of Early Childhood Education and the Office of Space Planning] inform their decisions.*
- The Office of District Planning was responsible for “figuring out when we have excess space in schools” and determining how best to locate pre-K programs in district schools. According to one interviewed stakeholder, this included “working out the methodology for demand and need and then figuring out where we can meet that demand and need with spaces in existing schools.”

⁶ The roles of the offices described here are self-reported data from key stakeholders who were interviewed as part of the evaluation. In some instances, the descriptions may not reflect the formal role of the office within the *Pre-K for All* site recruitment process.

- The Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality helped sites hire staff once they were accepted into the program. This office identified pools of candidates with and without certifications from which the NYCEECs could find the teachers they needed. The office also developed a website—TeachNYCPreK—to attract candidates to the pre-K program. For the most part, the services of this office were provided to DOE-contracted sites and district schools (which was the office’s core mission in years past).
- DECE field office staff provided critical support to NYCEECs during and after the application process. Operations analysts focused their support on the business operations of newly contracted sites, assisting with the purchasing of supplies, furniture, and food services. In addition, they provided technical assistance on budgeting and other basic elements of operations that were occasionally new to applicants. To a lesser extent, the instructional coordinators also provided support to newly contracted sites in this capacity.
- The Division of Contracts and Purchasing was responsible for awarding the contracts, although stakeholder feedback indicates this division requested and received the help of staff from other city agencies to help manage this process.

STAKEHOLDERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Agency stakeholders identified the following successes and effective site recruitment strategies.

- **Collaboration across various agencies and within DOE.** The recruitment and preparation of pre-K sites required a great deal of collaboration and joint efforts from multiple agencies and units within DOE. The intense effort, support, and commitment provided by this diverse group of stakeholders were noteworthy.
- **Creating seats in high-needs neighborhoods.** According to stakeholders, great strides were made during the first expansion year in providing additional seats to high-needs neighborhoods prioritized by the DOE, particularly in Brownsville and the South Bronx. High-needs areas for allocation of full-day pre-K seats were identified by the DOE based on the following characteristics:
 - Low student achievement in elementary school, based on proficiency on state exams;
 - Percentage of children not in any pre-K program in the year before kindergarten;
 - Universal pre-K seat need gap (fewer seats available than in kindergarten);
 - High utilization of existing universal pre-K programs;
 - Sites located within a New York City Housing Authority building.
- **Working in teams during the proposal review process.** There was overwhelming agreement among DECE staff that working in teams to review and visit prospective sites was extremely helpful, bringing in various perspectives and capitalizing on the expertise of different types of staff.
- **Building out the supports and monitoring processes to get sites ready.** In the first expansion year, structures and processes, for example through cross-agency dedicated workgroups, were put in place to monitor the “readiness” of the applicant sites and provide the supports they needed to

open their doors by the fall. This entailed a wide range of supports in areas such as permitting, facilities, operations, and staff recruitment.

According to agency stakeholders and the DECE staff, there were also a number of **challenges** to recruiting sites, with **the compressed time frame of site selection perhaps the most significant challenge leading up to Year 1** (the process began in late spring of 2014). A DECE representative detailed some of the challenges associated with the rapid site recruitment, noting that, because of time constraints, the necessary systems of data sharing were not yet in place, and there were no clear timelines or formalized methods of communicating about the work. DECE staff also indicated that the time for each phase of site selection was too short, including time for reviewing and scoring of proposals; conducting and writing up site visits; and communicating with sites about permitting requirements and resources.

SITE LEADERS' VIEWS OF THE APPLICATION AND PREPARATION PROCESS

Application Process and Supports

Eligible sites included district schools, charter schools, and independent programs under contract to DOE or ACS (NYCEECs). Some programs were either entirely new pre-K programs or new to the initiative, while others were looking to expand their existing universal pre-K program by increasing the number of seats (and classrooms) or by expanding the number of hours (from half-day to full-day).

From the perspective of providers, **the application process was clear and easy to navigate. Site leaders also reported positive feedback regarding the support they received during the application process**, demonstrating the extent to which the DOE and other city agencies provided the sites with the necessary supports. The management of the application process was also rated by surveyed DECE staff as the most effective aspect of the site recruitment process: 82 percent of DECE staff rated this aspect as *good* or *excellent* for district school sites and 75 percent of DECE staff rated this aspect as *good* or *excellent* for NYCEECs.

The large majority of administrators at the 40 sites that participated in interviews indicated that they did not face substantial challenges during the application process. Only three sites—two ACS NYCEECs and a DOE NYCEEC, reported challenges during this period. The ACS NYCEEC sites reported challenges with submitting required paperwork and understanding the terms of the teacher employment contract. Because the DOE NYCEEC site was not familiar with the application requirements and the “terminology,” and because, according to the respondent, support was not easily obtained, this site reported the process to be “very difficult.”

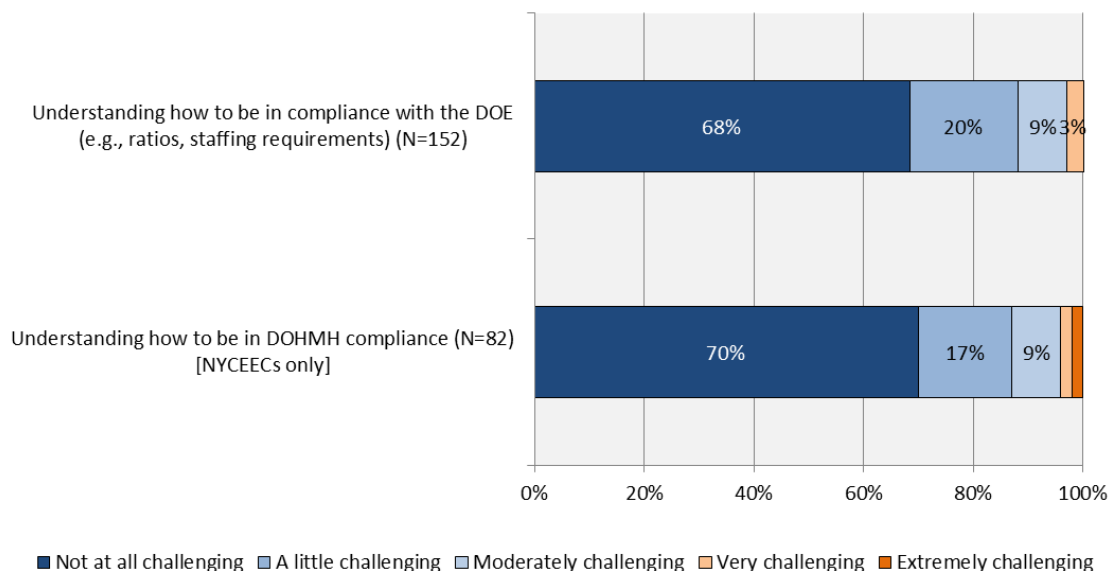
Compliance With Requirements

According to surveyed site leaders, understanding how to be in compliance with both the DOE and DOHMH requirements was not particularly challenging.⁷ DOE and DOHMH compliance includes aspects such as classroom staffing requirements, safety and health regulations, and health admission criteria for students. As presented in Figure 1, only 12 percent of site leaders identified understanding how to be in

⁷ District schools are not licensed by DOHMH and therefore are not included in the analysis of survey items related to DOHMH compliance.

DOE compliance as *moderately to very challenging* and just 13 percent of NYCEEC site leaders reported *moderate to extreme* challenges complying with the DOHMH. Nevertheless, **key stakeholders and DECE staff indicated that many newly contracted sites faced significant challenges in meeting applicable DOHMH and DOE requirements.** (To address this challenge, for Year 2, efforts have been made to centralize the management of site health and safety regulations.)

Figure I. Site Leaders' Understanding of DOE and DOHMH Compliance Requirements



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Internal Budgeting and Operations

Survey data indicate that many sites experienced challenges with internal budgeting and operations.

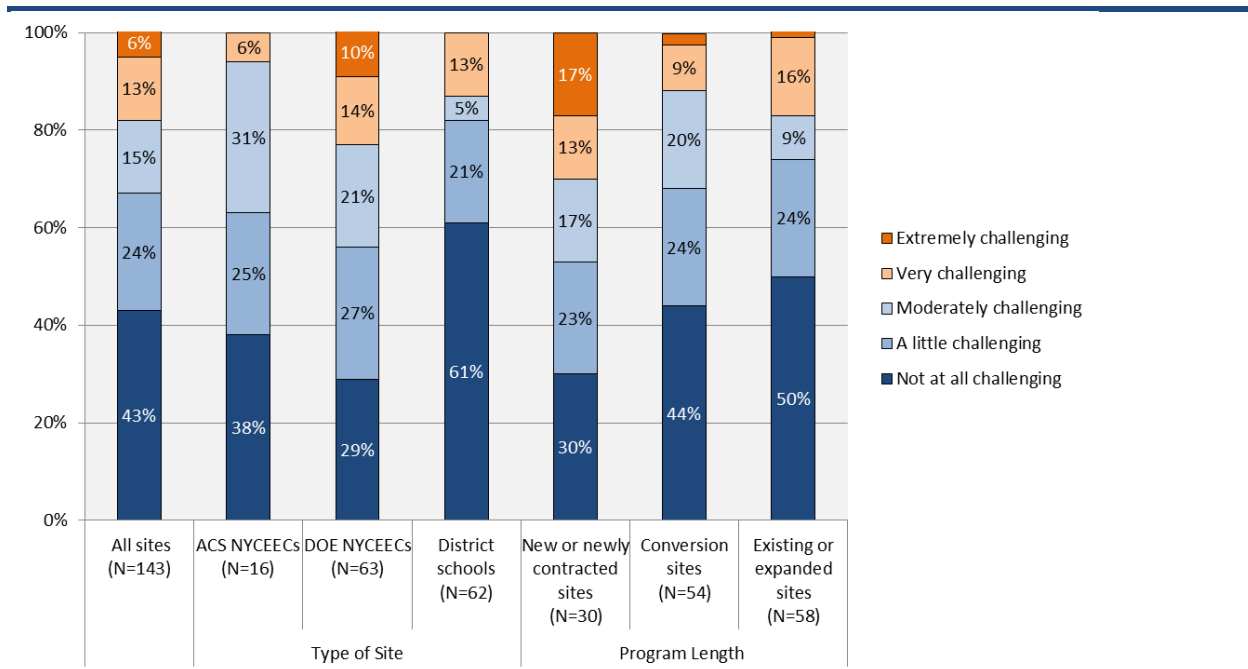
As presented in Figure 2, 34 percent of all sites identified *moderate to extreme* challenges in this area. When the results are disaggregated, Figure 2 also shows that:

Internal budgeting and program operations were challenges, especially for NYCEECs and newly contracted sites.

- A considerable proportion of DOE NYCEEC (45 percent) and ACS NYCEEC (37 percent) site leaders reported facing *moderate to extreme* challenges related to internal budgeting and operations. DOE NYCEECs were more likely than ACS NYCEECs to consider these challenges to be extreme. In comparison, district schools were less likely to report this type of challenge, with only 18 percent reporting *moderate to extreme* challenges.
- Almost half (47 percent) of newly contracted sites reported that internal budgeting and operations were *moderately to extremely challenging*, with 17 percent indicating that this area was *extremely challenging* for them. Conversion sites and, to a lesser extent, existing or expanded sites also faced challenges related to internal budgeting and operations, with 31 percent and 27 percent, respectively, reporting *moderate to extreme* challenges.

These findings are consistent with stakeholder reports that some sites did not have the business expertise to effectively manage their programs. To prepare sites in Year 2 to manage their budgets and program operations, additional trainings on the operational and business-related aspects of running a pre-K program were planned for newly contracted sites.

Figure 2. Site Leaders' Perceptions of Internal Budgeting and Operations, by Site Type and Program Length



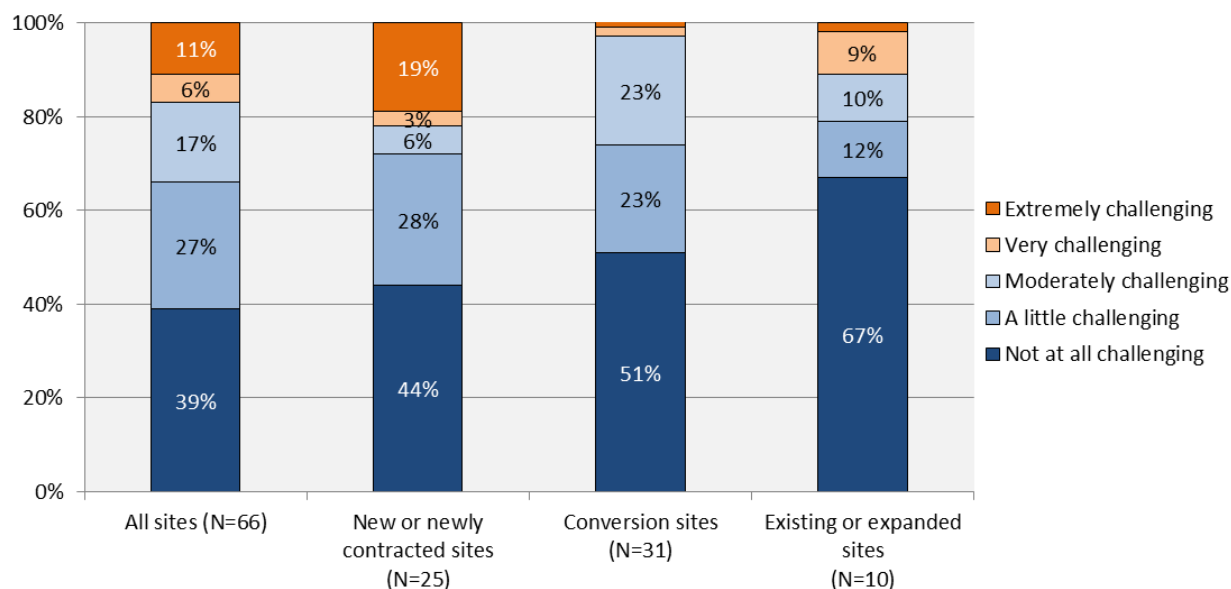
Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

DOE Contractual Issues

Over half of DOE NYCEECs site leaders indicated experiencing challenges to varying extents in understanding DOE contractual issues.⁸ Figure 3 shows that newly contracted sites were only slightly more likely to report difficulty (*moderate to extreme*) with contractual issues than conversion sites and existing or expanded sites (28 percent compared to 27 percent and 21 percent). Newly contracted sites, however, were much more likely to report *extreme* challenges in this area than each of the other types of sites (19 percent compared to 2 percent). These results suggest that understanding DOE contractual requirements involves a learning curve, and sites may require dedicated supports, especially for newly contracted DOE NYCEECs.

⁸ ACS NYCEECs and district schools do not have contracts with the DOE.

Figure 3. DOE NYCEEC Site Leaders' Perceptions of DOE Contractual Issues, by Program Length



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Satisfaction With Support for Site Preparation

The majority of interviewed site leaders were satisfied with the various supports they received from the DOE during site preparation, which focused on:

- **Budget:** An administrator of a new site responded that the support they received from the DOE with planning their budget for the school year was *very helpful*.
- **Compliance:** Another new site leader reported that DOE staff visited their facility to determine that their classrooms and bathroom facilities met the standard.
- **Dual-language programming:** An existing pre-K site reported that the DOE reached out to them to provide information about offering a dual-language program. With the DOE’s support, the site successfully applied to become a dual-language site for the 2015–16 school year.
- **Funding:** A conversion site reported that the timely funds they received from the DOE allowed them to purchase all new furniture, equipment, and books. As explained by this administrator, “They connected us to the funds and we were able to pay our teachers on time...it's very helpful.”

We were able to buy everything that we would need to get the classroom ready for the school year. In terms of the classroom setup...it all went very smoothly.

Pre-K Site Leader

Site visit data indicate that **many sites either faced no challenges or minor challenges with starting up their programs**. Only four site leaders discussed challenges related to preparing their sites. The challenges stemmed from being unfamiliar with DOE guidelines in general or with requirements specific to the *Pre-K for All* initiative. One DOE NYCEECs administrator indicated that the late arrival of materials presented a start-up challenge

Approximately 2 of every 10 surveyed site leaders reported a need for additional support in particular areas relevant to them: dealing with contractual issues with the DOE (21 percent); internal budgeting and program operations (18 percent); obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (16 percent); understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance (15 percent); and understanding how to be in compliance with DOE (15 percent). Figure 4 presents these results.

Figure 4. Site Leaders’ Need for Additional Program Start-up Supports

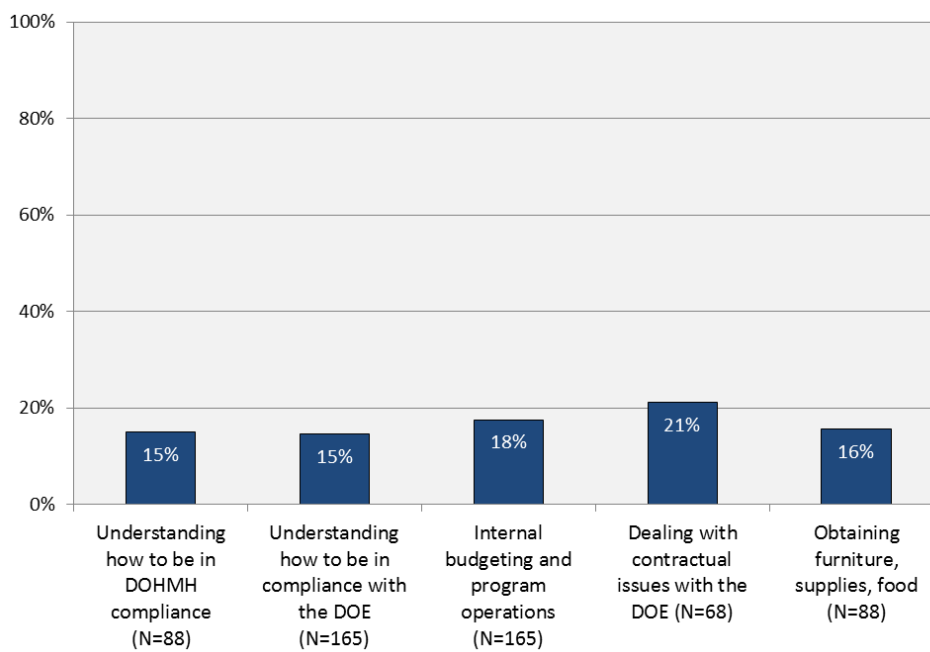


Table 1 lists the areas of additional types of support needed for program start-up identified by site leaders, by site type and program length.⁹ Results show that:

- District schools and DOE NYCEECs were more likely to need assistance with internal budgeting and program operations and ACS NYCEECs with understanding how to be in DOE compliance.
- Newly contracted sites were more likely to need assistance with furniture, supplies, and food and understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance.
- Conversion sites were more likely to need assistance with DOE compliance and internal budget and operations.

⁹ It should be noted that different types of sites receive supports from different offices. DOE NYCEECs relied primarily on supports provided by DECE, whereas district schools received supports from various offices within DOE. ACS NYCEECs received supports from ACS and DECE, depending on the topic.

- Existing or expanded sites were more likely to need assistance with dealing with DOE contractual issues.

Table I. Areas of Need for Additional Start-Up Support, by Site Type and Program Length

Site Type and Program Length		
ACS NYCEECs	DOE NYCEECs	District Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (20%) ✓ Obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (20%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance (10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal budgeting and program operations (27%) ✓ Dealing with contractual issues with the DOE (21%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (18%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance (16%) ✓ Obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (16% all sites, but 27% newly contracted sites and 17% existing or expanded sites) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal budgeting and program operations (16%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (9%)
Program Length		
New or newly contracted sites	Conversion sites	Existing or expanded sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (NYCEECs only, 27%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance (NYCEECs only, 27%) ✓ Dealing with contractual issues with the DOE (DOE NYCEECs only, 23%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (21%) ✓ Internal budgeting and program operations (21%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (17%) ✓ Internal budgeting and program operations (17%) ✓ Dealing with contractual issues with the DOE (DOE NYCEECs only, 16%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOHMH compliance (NYCEECs only, 12%) ✓ Obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (NYCEECs only, 10%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dealing with contractual issues with the DOE (DOE NYCEECs only, 30%) ✓ Internal budgeting and program operations (18%) ✓ Obtaining furniture, supplies, and food (NYCEECs only, 17%) ✓ Understanding how to be in DOE compliance (9%)

Suggestions for Improving the Application and Start-Up Process

Interviewed site leaders offered the following suggestions for improving the application process and site preparation:

- Provide more information to newly contracted sites on the vision of *Pre-K for All* and DOE’s expectations for programs, including documentation needed, assessments, and curriculum materials.
- Provide more frequent updates about compliance with health, sanitation, and fire safety regulations.
- Provide more information regarding DOE budget guidelines.

- Offer training on classroom arrangement, which is one of the areas assessed on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R).

Site leaders also offered the following advice to sites applying to and starting a full-day pre-K program for the first time:

- **Application:** Create a small team to work on the program application.
- **Budget:** Create a detailed budget that accounts for all allocations.
- **Cash flow:** Having a strong cash flow is important for supporting start-up operations while contracts are in the process of being registered. As one administrator said, “Make sure you have enough startup capital to operate a good eight months without ever seeing a check from the city.”
- **Compliance:** Pay close attention to understanding DOE and DOHMH regulations to avoid any compliance issues.

STAFFING

This section of the report describes findings on staff recruitment, staff qualifications and experience, and staff satisfaction with the *Pre-K for All* experience.

STAFF RECRUITMENT

As a result of the expansion efforts, 1,000 new lead teachers were hired in full-day classrooms for the 2014–15 school year. Within and outside of DOE, there were efforts to ensure that sites—particularly newly contracted sites—would have access to a pool of qualified candidates from which to staff their programs.

The Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality played an instrumental role in the expansion rollout by helping sites to hire qualified teaching staff.

Within the DOE, the **Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality** played an instrumental role in helping sites hire staff once applications were approved. According to key stakeholders who were interviewed for this study, the efforts of this office were identified as particularly successful. Specifically, the office identified pools of candidates with and without certification from which the sites could recruit teachers. TeachNYC, a website developed to draw potential candidates to teaching positions in New York City, was used to identify candidates. Additional successful outreach strategies to raise awareness and assist potential candidates in securing positions included webinars, focus groups, panels, and hiring events where potential applicants could meet with site directors. For the most part, the services of this office were provided to all *Pre-K for All* sites, including DOE- and ACS-contracted NYCEECs, and district schools (which was the office’s core mission in the past).

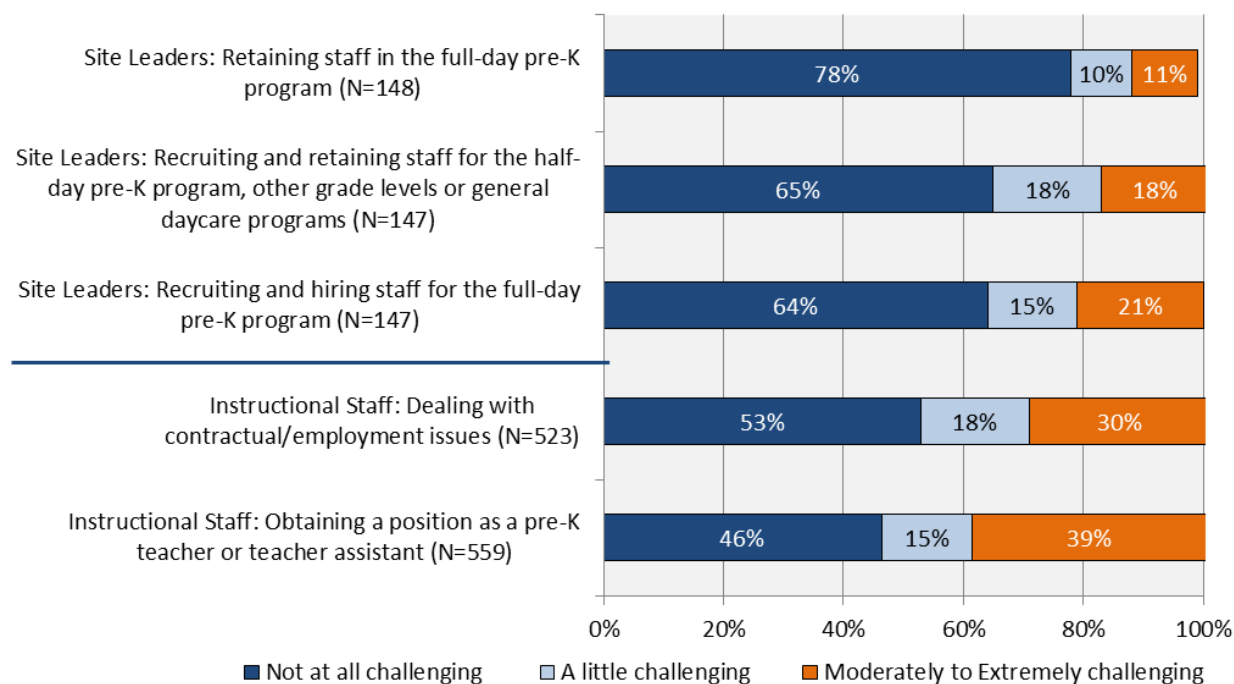
Survey and interview data indicate that **staff recruitment did not pose a significant challenge for many of the sites**. Specifically, findings presented in Figure 5 show that:

- The large majority of site leaders reported experiencing no challenges or minimal challenges in recruiting and hiring staff for the full-day program (79 percent) or retaining staff in the full-day program (88 percent).
- In contrast, almost 4 of every 10 surveyed instructional staff (39 percent) reported moderate to extreme challenges in obtaining a position as a pre-K teacher or teacher assistant.

- Given the large increase in the number of full-day pre-K seats, some stakeholders raised concerns about the potential implications on their ability to recruit and retain staff for half-day programs because of a perceived preference for a full-day program position. Yet, for the most part, these concerns were unsubstantiated, with 83 percent of site leaders reporting no or minimal challenges in this area.

Figure 5 presents the detailed responses of site leaders and instructional staff.

Figure 5. Perceptions of Staff Recruitment (Site Leader and Instructional Staff Surveys)



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding.

Yet, as noted by key stakeholders and DECE staff, finding qualified teaching staff and completing the fingerprinting and clearance process before the start of the school year was a **challenge for some sites, particularly for new NYCEECs.**¹⁰

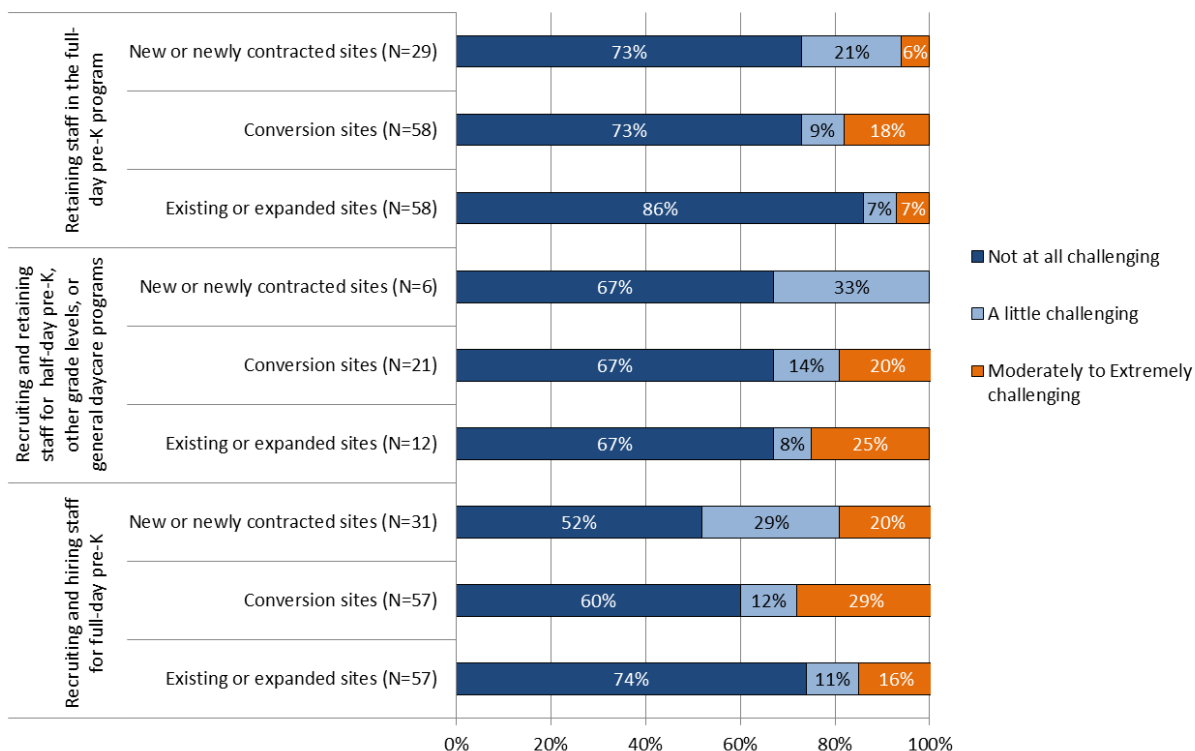
These findings were consistent with survey and interview results.

- For example, site leaders at ACS NYCEECs, and to a lesser extent from DOE NYCEECs, were more likely than district school site leaders to report experiencing at least *moderate* challenges with recruiting and hiring staff for the full-day pre-K program (33 percent and 31 percent compared to 8 percent, respectively) and retaining staff in these programs (32 percent and 16 percent compared to 2 percent).
- Similarly, instructional staff from ACS NYCEECs were more likely to report that dealing with contractual and employment issues was at least *moderately* challenging than staff at DOE NYCEECs and district schools (44 percent compared to 32 percent and 23 percent).

¹⁰ DOE provided free fingerprinting.

Staff from new or newly contracted sites also reported experiencing more challenges in obtaining a position as a pre-K teacher or teaching assistant and dealing with contractual/employment issues than staff in conversion or existing or expanded sites. In contrast, leaders at conversion sites were more likely than those at new or newly contracted sites and district school sites to report at least *moderate challenges* in recruiting and hiring staff for the program; retaining these staff in the pre-K program; and recruiting and retaining staff for the half-day program, other grade levels, or other daycare programs at the same sites. These results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Perceptions of Staff Recruitment, by Program Length



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Interview findings were consistent with survey findings. Among the 40 sites that participated in the site visits, **only six of them reported experiencing challenges in recruiting qualified staff**. According to site leaders, challenges stemmed from various factors, including the late approval from DOE (in early August), which made it difficult to find qualified and available staff, and salary differentials (and better benefits) at district schools (described below). Yet, sites noted they were able to address these challenges by beginning the process early, even before final approval was received (at one site), by putting together a team of experienced directors from other sites within the same organization to oversee the interviewing and hiring process (at another site), and by hiring staff who were still going through the certification process (at a third site).

Pre-K teachers working in CBO's like me are doing the same work as NYC school teachers and receiving considerably less salary. It is not fair and very disheartening when you work so hard for these children in need and receive unfair pay.

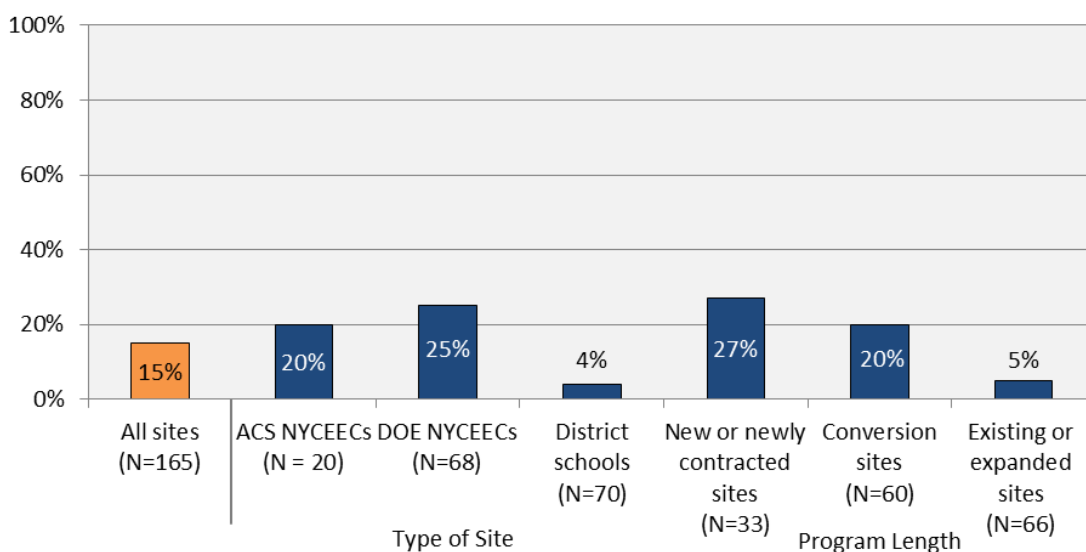
Pre-K Teacher

As noted earlier, **salary differentials between district school sites and DOE and ACS NYCEECs were identified as representing a challenge to staff recruitment and retention at NYCEECs.** During the site visits, for example, several administrators and teachers from NYCEECs brought up the issue, noting that disparities have resulted in dissatisfaction among some pre-K instructional staff and have also had a detrimental impact on staff retention at some sites. In the first year of expansion, the DOE enacted changes that allowed interested NYCEECs to increase annual pay for lead teachers to support programs in attracting and retaining quality instructors. The DOE took extra steps to increase pay for pre-K teachers across the unified system, as part of the expansion of *Pre-K for All*. The goal was to move toward parity wherever possible by enacting changes that allowed interested NYCEECs to increase annual pay for lead teachers by opting into higher salary levels for certified teachers.

Salary differentials were also reported within ACS NYCEECs. As described by a stakeholder, ACS NYCEECs that joined the *Pre-K for All* initiative received resources to provide salary enhancements to staff teaching in this program. This has led to salary differentials between these staff and staff teaching in other early childhood education programs (e.g., Head Start and other pre-K teachers) within the same sites and across ACS NYCEECs.

About 15 percent of site leaders who completed surveys requested additional support for staff recruitment. ACS and DOE NYCEECs and newly contracted and conversion sites were more likely than other sites to want additional support, as these sites reported experiencing the most challenges. In an interview, one site leader requested support from DOE for advertising for positions and identifying potential candidates, whereas another noted that better salaries for NYCEEC teachers would help attract more candidates. These results are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Site Leaders' Need for Additional Staff Recruitment Supports



STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The *Pre-K for All* model requires two instructional staff (a certified teacher and a teacher assistant or paraprofessional) for each class of 18 children or fewer. Classes with more than 18 children require one certified teacher and two paraprofessionals.¹¹ The required qualifications of these staff are described next.

According to the *Pre-K for All Policy Handbook*, lead teachers must have one of the following:

- A teaching license or certificate valid for service in the early childhood grades as set forth in New York State Education Department regulations. This includes early childhood (Birth–Grade 2); Nursery, Kindergarten and Grades 1–6; or Prekindergarten–Grade 6 certification.
- A teaching license or certificate for students with disabilities valid for service in the early childhood grades.
- A bachelor’s degree in early childhood or a related field and a written plan for obtaining early childhood (Birth–Grade 2) certification (not applicable to district schools).
 - A teacher with certification in childhood education (Grades 1–6) does not meet lead teacher certification requirements for *Pre-K for All*. These teachers are required to have a written plan for obtaining an early childhood (Birth–Grade 2) certification within three years of employment.

In addition, all lead teachers must complete a mandatory two hours of training in child abuse maltreatment identification, reporting, and prevention.

A teacher assistant must meet all of the following qualifications:

- Be 18 years of age;
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED);
- Hold a valid Level I or higher New York City Teaching Assistant certification;
- Complete mandatory two hours of training in child abuse and maltreatment identification, reporting, and prevention as well as the requirements of applicable statutes and regulations;
- Complete 15 hours of training every 24 months, including mandatory training in child abuse maltreatment identification, reporting and prevention and requirements of applicable statutes and regulations, and other subjects related to child health and safety, and early childhood development.

In order to support the *Pre-K for All* expansion efforts, in 2014–15, the DOE leveraged a key **partnership with The City University of New York’s Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (CUNY PDI) to build a growing workforce of high-quality pre-K teachers** that can meet the needs of every child. Through the Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project, the partnership provided two expedited certification pathways for early childhood professionals who committed to teach a minimum of two years in a *Pre-K for All* classroom after becoming certified. The first track was geared toward individuals with bachelor’s degrees who had not previously taught at the pre-K level. While serving as pre-K teachers in NYCEECs, they were enrolled in a full-time master’s program and had to meet state early childhood certification requirements with 14 months. The second track targeted individuals with written

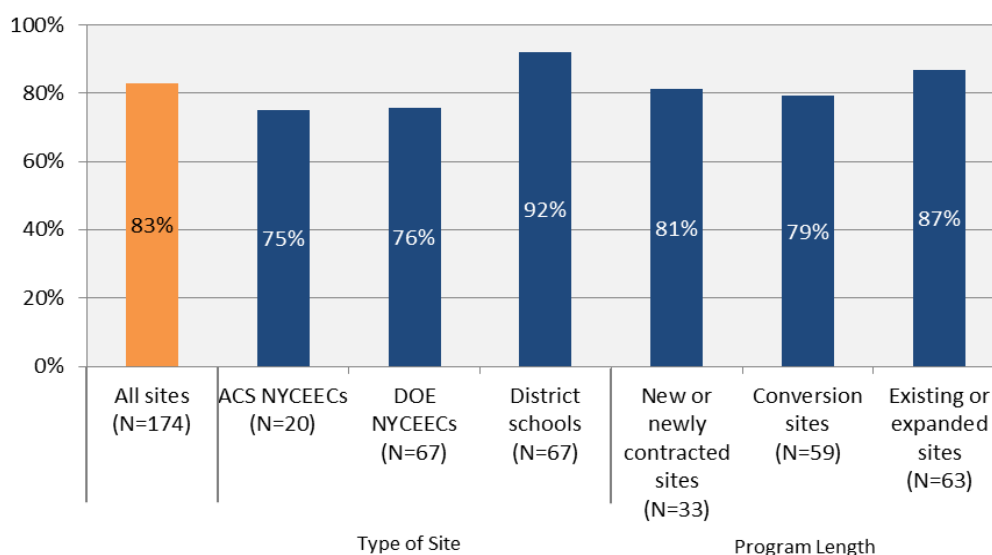
¹¹ *Pre-K for All* classrooms have a maximum of 20 students. A student to teacher ratio of 20:3 is allowed in certain district schools.

plans for certification who were already teaching in NYCEECs. Assisted by a PDI advisor, they revised and expedited their study plans so they could be certified by fall 2015. In 2014–15, the Teacher Preparation Project allowed for up to 400 teachers to participate. Key stakeholders reported in interviews that this partnership met a major workforce need of the *Pre-K for All* initiative, one that they recommended should be continued and expanded.

Self-reported data on staff qualifications and experience were collected through the surveys of site leaders and instructional staff.¹² According to their responses, which are presented in Figure 8 (from site leader surveys) and Figure 9 (from lead teacher surveys), **approximately 8 out of every 10 lead teachers have the NYS Early Childhood certification**, and almost all of those who do not have certification were currently pursuing it at the time they completed the survey.¹³

Survey results also indicate that **district schools were considerably more likely than NYCEECs to have lead teachers who had a NYS Early Childhood certification**.¹⁴ Among study sites, 90 percent of lead teachers in district schools reported having NYS certification, compared to 63 percent of lead teachers in DOE NYCEECs and 56 percent of lead teachers in ACS NYCEECs. In addition, lead teachers in existing or expanded sites were considerably more likely to have State Early Childhood certification than lead teachers in new or conversion sites (85 percent compared to 59 percent and 74 percent, respectively).

Figure 8. Percent of Lead Teachers with NYS Early Childhood Certification (Site Leader Survey)

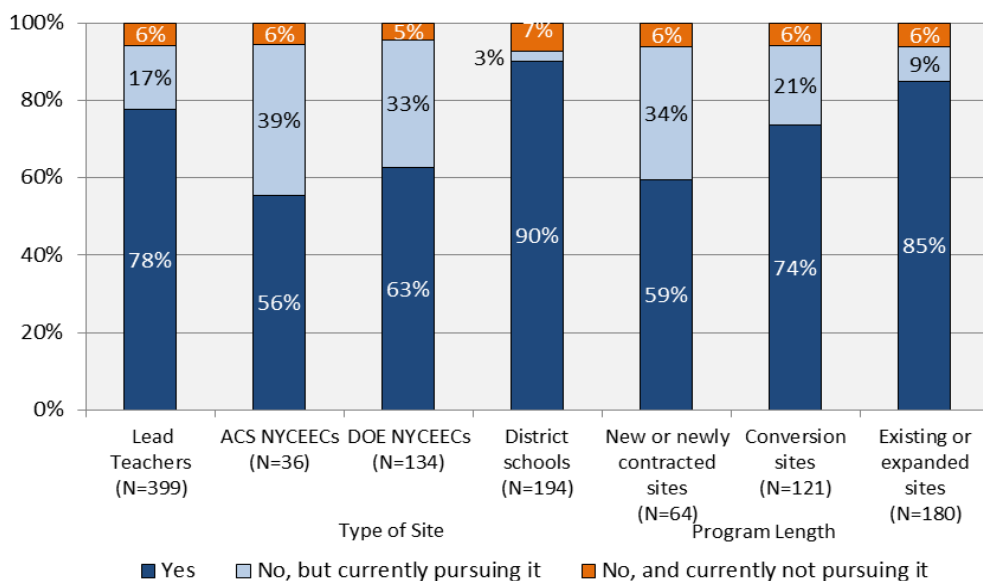


¹² Personnel data on pre-K staff qualifications and experience were not available at the time this report was written.

¹³ Further information on the small percentage of lead teachers who indicated they were not certified and were not pursuing certification was not available from the survey.

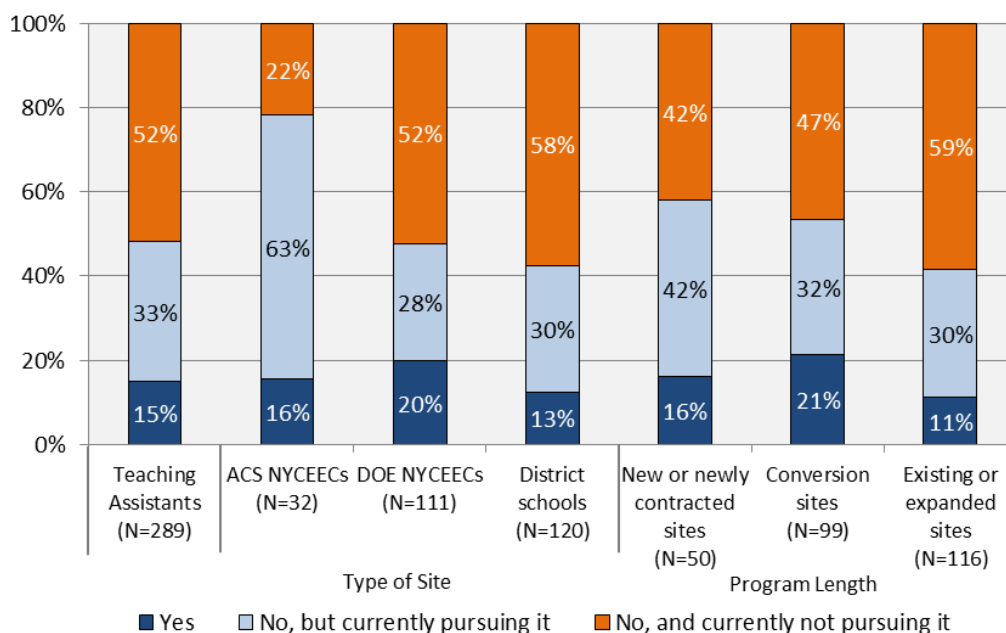
¹⁴ To be employed as a lead teacher at a district school *Pre-K for All* site, lead teachers must have a relevant teaching certification. Although 7 percent of lead teachers at district schools reported that they do *not* have a NYS Early Childhood certification, they may have had other types of licenses such as certification to teach students with disabilities.

Figure 9. Lead Teachers' NYS Early Childhood Certification (Lead Teacher Survey)



Although teacher assistants are not required to have NYS Early Childhood certification, survey results show that a considerable proportion are in the process of obtaining the certification (33 percent) or already have certification (15 percent). Interestingly, a much larger proportion of teacher assistants from ACS NYCEECs or newly contracted sites reported that they are currently pursuing certification, compared to teacher assistants in other sites. Figure 10 shows detailed results from the teacher assistant survey.

Figure 10. Teacher Assistants' NYS Certification (Teacher Assistant Survey)



The surveys also asked lead teachers and teacher assistants to report on their teaching experience. **Results show that, on average, lead teachers had 5 years of experience in a pre-K educational setting¹⁵ (ranging from 1 to 34 years) and almost 13 years in any educational setting (ranging from 1 to 40).**

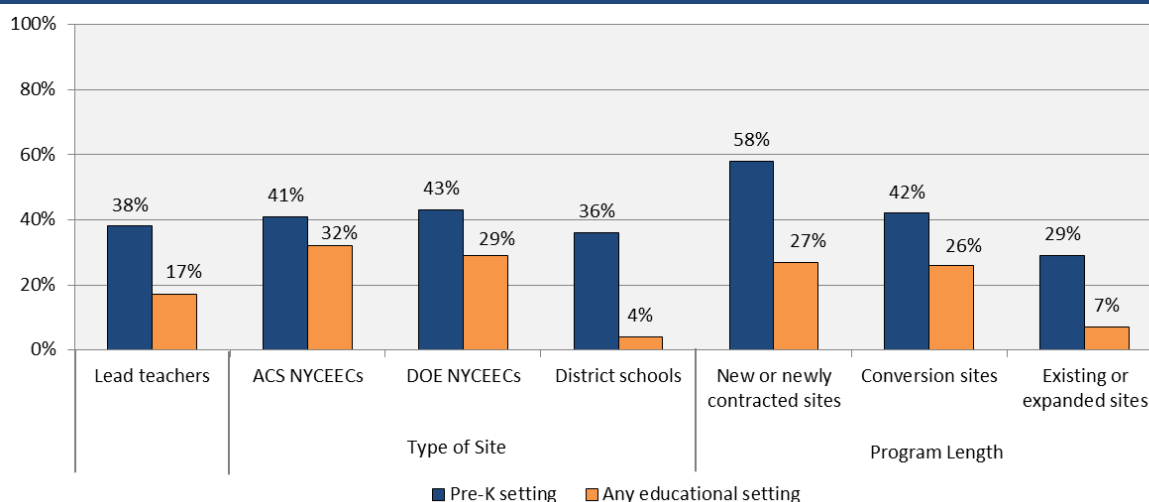
In addition, a considerable proportion of instructional staff indicated that they are relatively new to teaching at the pre-K level, and some are new to the teaching profession. For example, as shown in Figure 11, 38 percent of lead teachers reported having fewer than three years of experience in a pre-K setting, and 17 percent had fewer than three years in any educational setting.

When disaggregating the survey responses by site type, length of program, and staff position, results presented in Figure 10 indicate that:

- Although NYCEECs and district schools reported a similar proportion of lead teachers with fewer than three years of pre-K experience, in general, lead teachers in district schools had considerably more general teaching experience than lead teachers in ACS and DOE NYCEECs: only 4 percent of lead teachers in district schools were relatively new to the teaching profession, compared to 32 percent in ACS NYCEECs and 29 percent in DOE NYCEECs.
- New or newly contracted sites reported the largest proportion of inexperienced teachers (58 percent had fewer than three years of experience in pre-K, and 27 percent had fewer than three years in any educational setting), followed by conversion sites (42 percent and 26 percent, respectively). In existing or expanded sites, 29 percent of lead teachers had fewer than three years of pre-K experience, but only 7 percent had fewer than three years of overall teaching experience (in any educational setting).

Very similar patterns were reported by teacher assistants, with district school staff having more experience than staff at the other sites.

Figure 11. Percentage of Lead Teachers With Fewer Than Three Years of Experience (Lead Teacher Survey)



¹⁵ It should be noted that teachers may have had experience in other early childhood education settings. The survey asked only about experience in pre-K specifically.

STAFF SATISFACTION

Overall, the large majority of surveyed instructional staff reported being *satisfied or very satisfied* with their pre-K teaching experience (88 percent of lead teachers and 90 percent of teaching assistants). As shown in Figure 12, district school teachers were more likely to be satisfied than staff at DOE and ACS NYCEECs (96 percent compared to 83 percent and 77 percent, respectively). Similarly, instructional staff at existing or expanded sites were also more likely to report satisfaction than staff in new or newly contracted or conversion sites (95 percent compared to 86 percent and 83 percent, respectively).

In open-ended comments, instructional staff commented on how much they have enjoyed working with children in this age group, who were described as “inquisitive” and “eager to learn,” and seeing them grow dramatically over the course of the year. Staff also spoke about the importance of the pre-K learning experience in preparing students for later success and were proud to be a part of it.

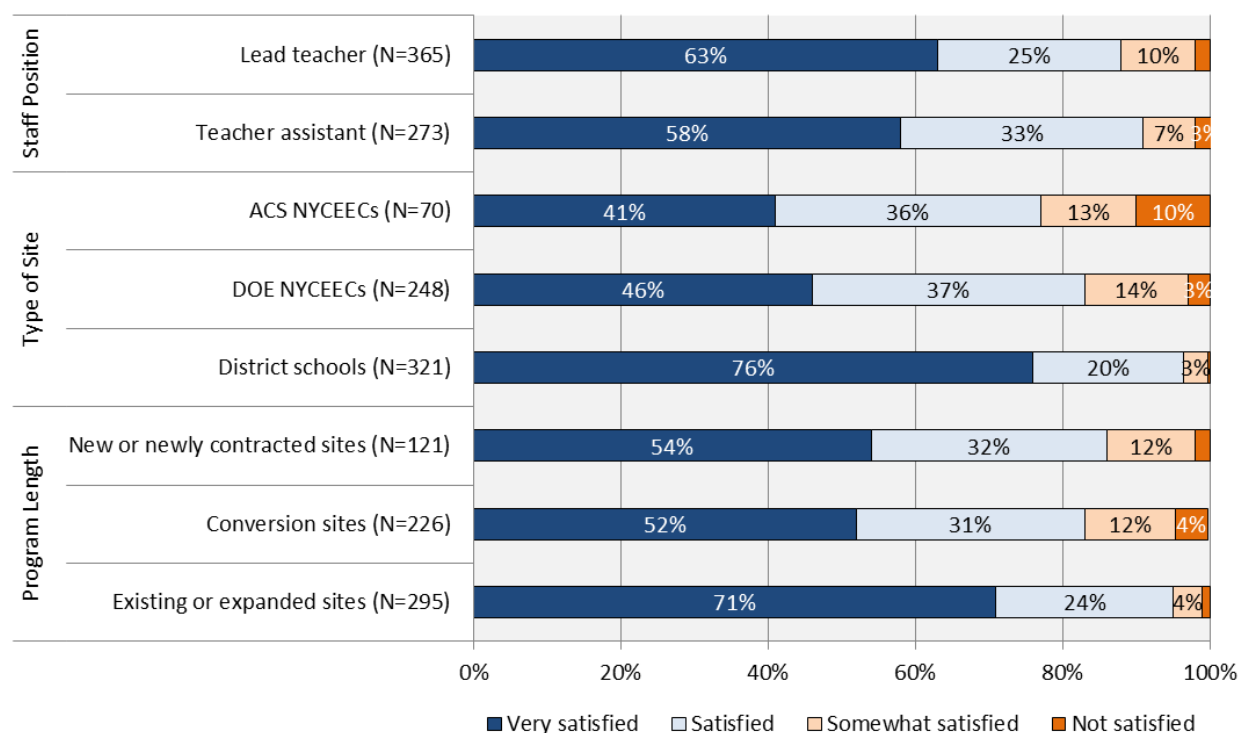
I have loved every minute of my job this year. As a pre-K teacher, I am able to see every day how I make a difference in my students' lives and that motivates me to be the best I can be for them.

Pre-K is a crucial time in a child's life and I feel this program gets them off and running for their kindergarten experience.

I enjoy teaching pre-kindergarten so much. I love working with children at this age. They are so inquisitive and eager to learn.

Pre-K Teachers

Figure 12. Instructional Staff's Satisfaction With Pre-K Experience



Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages of less than 3 percent are not labeled.

Among the few respondents who were not satisfied, the most common reasons reported were salary differentials between NYCEECs and district schools, lack of support for teachers and/or general disorganization at the site, too much emphasis on assessment and other prescribed activities, not enough time to engage students through play, not enough time to plan and prepare (particularly in NYCEEC sites), and burden on teachers at ACS NYCEECs who must meet multiple requirements from the various agencies and funding streams.

Almost all surveyed staff (96 percent) reported that they plan to continue teaching in a New York City pre-K classroom in 2015–16. Among the few who did not plan to, the reasons were varied and included leaving the system to continue their education, transferring to other grade levels, and retiring.

Suggestions for Consideration Related to Staffing

- Continue to engage key agencies and city officials in finding ways to mitigate the issue of salary and benefit differentials between district school teachers and NYCEEC teachers, and—within NYCEECs—teachers who are paid from different funding streams. As noted earlier, the DOE has secured additional funding to address some of the salary inequities in the system.
- Continue the Pre-kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project to allow additional teachers the opportunity to obtain their Birth to Grade 2 teaching certification and by doing so add qualified teachers to the pre-K workforce.
- Intensify efforts to support sites—particularly newly contracted sites and NYCEECs in general—in the area of staff recruitment, for example by expanding DOE’s activities that were reported to be successful (e.g., webinars and information sessions, and “meet and greet” sessions where site directors can meet candidates).
- Provide executed contracts to sites earlier in the summer (in Year 1 contracts for some sites were not ready until the end of the summer) so site leaders may have more time to recruit and hire the staff for their programs.

FAMILY RECRUITMENT

OUTREACH SUPPORTS

As noted earlier, the goal of the expansion efforts was to increase the number of students enrolled in full-day pre-K from 19,300 to over 53,000. To achieve this, the Mayor’s Office and the DOE engaged in intensive inter-agency outreach and direct family outreach efforts.

The city’s outreach process was informed by market research conducted through focus groups and online polling to determine what families would find appealing about pre-K and the most effective methods for conveying information to families. Agencies also relied on internal data systems and commercially purchased data sets to obtain information on eligible families.

A dedicated outreach team was created under DECE and worked closely with the Office of the Mayor to oversee and facilitate family recruitment.¹⁶ Families with eligible children (based on age) were directly contacted by outreach workers through a systematic process of automated and non-automated telephone calls. In addition, families were offered information through face-to-face encounters with outreach team members and street canvassers from DECE who were sent to targeted neighborhoods as well as neighborhood “access points” such as churches, street fairs, barbershops, and hair salons. In addition, the outreach team worked with community organizations, elected officials, and other city agencies to distribute materials about the program. Finally, DOE and the Office of the Mayor took considerable measures to cultivate broad, citywide, community awareness about the initiative through the use of media (radio and online) and press coverage, a texting campaign, mass mailings, and a request that participating sites ask their families to share information with others in their communities.

In addition to the dedicated outreach team, family recruitment efforts were supported by:

- DOE operations analysts, who collected families’ enrollment packages from ACS NYCEECs and DOE NYCEECs, confirmed enrollments at these sites, and developed seat counts;
- The DOE Office of Student Enrollment, which managed enrollment at district school sites; and
- Strong collaboration between the DOE and the Mayor’s Press Office, which helped build media awareness of the initiative.

However, stakeholders reported that having two simultaneous family application processes, one for the district schools and another for the NYCEECs was very challenging. Because families could apply for seats at more than one site (one district school site and as many NYCEECs as they independently contacted), it was challenging for city agencies to track enrollment trends in real-time. Furthermore, the process made it difficult for the outreach team to follow up with parents on their decisions, since there was no centralized database of applications submitted. The challenge was resolved by the development of a unified enrollment process for the second expansion year, which allowed families to submit a single application ranking their top choices across both NYCEECs and district schools.

SITE LEADERS’ VIEWS ON FAMILY RECRUITMENT

In addition to the outreach efforts conducted by city agencies, **Pre-K for All sites used a variety of strategies to recruit families to their programs.** The following strategies were described by site leaders during site visits:

[Parents] bring siblings, they bring nephews, nieces and the people who live around [the neighborhood] – and I’m very proud.

The mayor did a very excellent job telling the whole world about Pre-K for All. I even got my phone call!

Student recruitment is very simple in this community because we have a base where people come all the time from the neighborhood.

I think for our particular area, there are either not a lot of programs or we have a very good reputation – I’d like to think it was that, more than anything. I’m constantly getting phone calls; I’m constantly getting walk-ins of people looking for programs...I constantly had a running list that when I did lose those two kids, I was able to right to go to my list, call them and say, ‘Look, I got a spot.’

Pre-K Site Leaders

¹⁶ The outreach team consisted of DOE employees and had a dual-reporting structure to DOE and the Office of the Mayor.

- Posting informational flyers;
- Face-to-face parent outreach in community organizations and parks;
- School website advertising;
- Informational pre-K events where instructional staff and the site director discussed the initiative and its goals, curriculum, and offerings to parents with (younger) children enrolled at their center;
- Pre-K open houses during the time of enrollment.

Findings from interviews with directors show that for many sites **recruiting families was a relatively straightforward process**. For these sites, recruitment and enrollment was successful largely because there was a high demand for pre-K programming in their community, or conversely, there was a limited number of programs in their community for families to choose. Some site leaders also mentioned that the good reputation of their program within the community as well as word of mouth contributed to their success.

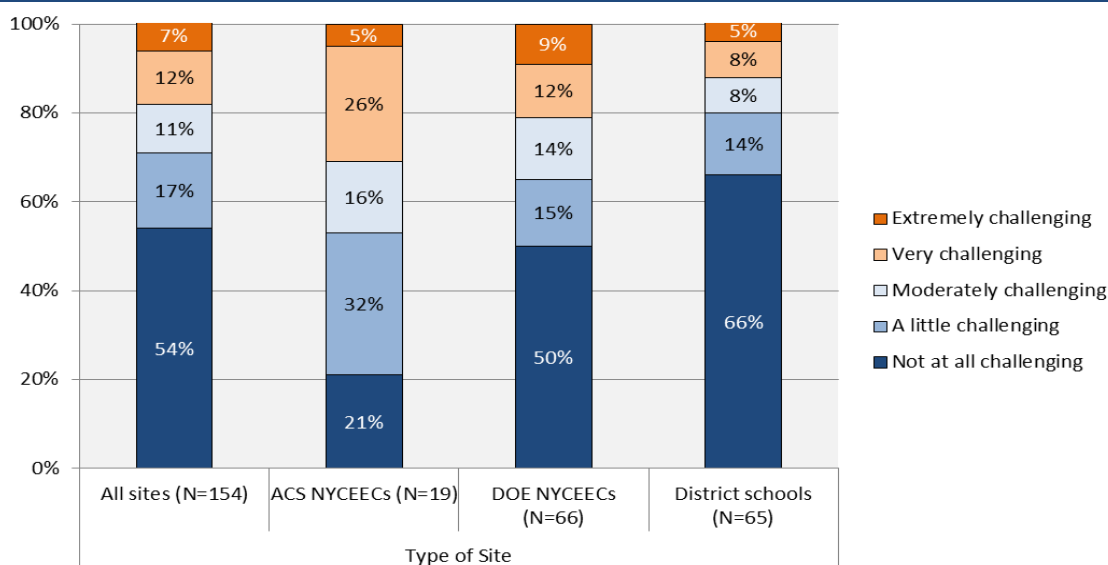
Many sites faced no challenges with recruiting and enrolling students as either the demand for pre-K programs in their community was high, or there were not many programs in the community for families to choose from.

Among the different types of sites, ACS NYCEECs were the most likely to experience challenges with family recruitment, which were attributed to competition with district schools.

Sites used a variety of recruitment strategies to inform families about their pre-K programs such as face-to-face outreach in parks and open houses.

Survey results were consistent with interview findings and indicate that just over half of sites (54 percent) experienced no difficulty with recruiting families. As one administrator said, their site had “no problem with student recruitment or enrollment.” Some types of sites, though, indicated facing more challenges than others. Most district schools (60 percent) and half (50 percent) of DOE NYCEECs reported no difficulties with recruitment. **However, nearly half (47 percent) of ACS NYCEECs reported moderate to extreme challenges.** These results are presented in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Site Leaders’ Views of Recruitment and Enrollment Challenges, by Site Type



Challenges noted by interviewed site leaders are presented below.

- **Competition with neighboring district schools:** The largest challenge discussed by NYCEEC site leaders was competing with district schools for the same families. One of the NYCEEC site leaders commented that the “late start in recruitment” coupled with the competition with the district schools in their neighborhood contributed to full enrollment in only one of their two pre-K classrooms. As the administrator from this site said,

When we were given the okay to start, we had so many competitors, everyone was scrambling for those kids who were left over from district schools. So if we had gotten an earlier start, chances are, we would have had two classrooms full.”

The competition with district school sites did not only occur at the point of initial recruitment. NYCEEC site leaders indicated that early attrition was also a challenge, with students leaving because they were offered seats at their local district school.

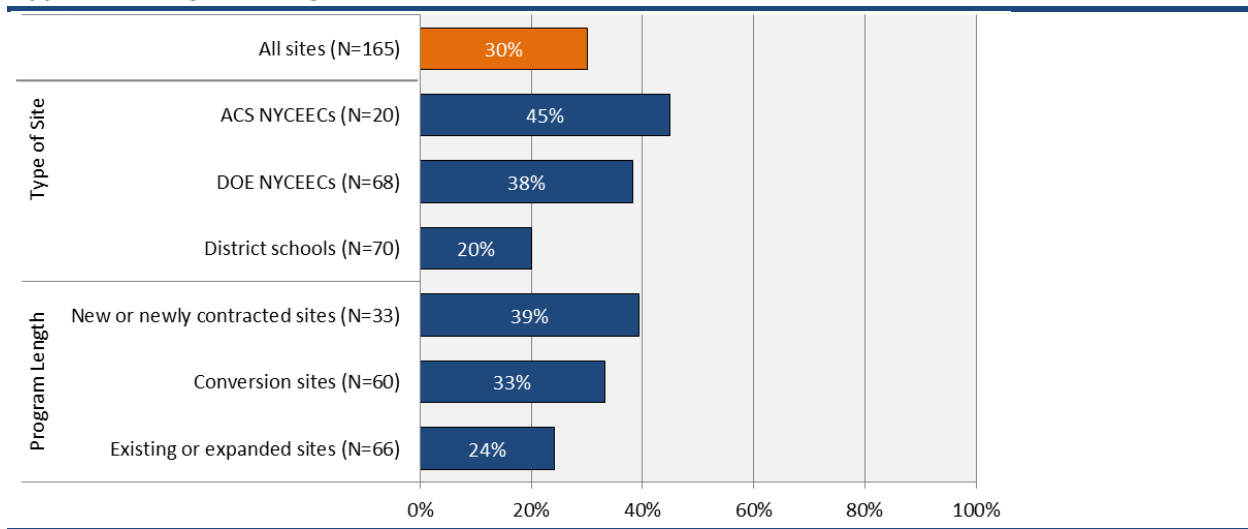
- **Insufficient number of pre-K seats within a community:** The high demand for pre-K programming in certain neighborhoods presented a challenge. For example, one DOE NYCEEC site was not able to serve as many children in their community because they converted from a larger number of half-day seats to a smaller number of full-day seats.
- **Enrollment process:** Some site leaders reported that the enrollment process was challenging as it required an adjustment to new enrollment practices that they perceived to be inefficient. For example, one site leader indicated a preference for enrolling families on a rolling basis in order to better prepare for the program start and tailor their recruitment efforts accordingly. Another site leader mentioned that they preferred to register students themselves because “it was more personal.” However, in discussing student enrollment, three site leaders expected that the unified enrollment process implemented in Year 2 would greatly simplify the process.¹⁷

SITE LEADERS’ NEED FOR RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT SUPPORT

As shown in Figure 14, almost a third (30 percent) of surveyed site leaders indicated a need for additional support with recruitment and enrollment. The survey data also show that NYCEECs (45 percent of ACS NYCEECs and 38 percent of DOE NYCEECs) require more additional support than district school sites.

¹⁷ In Year 1 of the initiative NYCEECs used center-based enrollment, while district schools had a centralized enrollment process. In Year 2 of the initiative, a common enrollment process for all types of sites was instituted.

Figure 14. Site Leaders’ Need for Additional Recruitment and Enrollment Supports, by Site Type and Program Length



Note: Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding.

To address sites’ challenges with recruitment, a number of efforts were implemented in the second year of program expansion. **Most notably, a unified enrollment process allowed families to submit a single application in which they could rank their top choices across both NYCEEC and district school sites.**

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE EXPANSION AND CONSEQUENCES FOR CITY AGENCIES

The *Pre-K for All* initiative was an inter-agency effort that **successfully engaged a very large number of key players and city agencies. Changes to the internal infrastructure and capacity** of key city agencies—and in particular the DOE—and the **development of collaborations** between and within agencies were identified as two of the most important accomplishments.

The level of commitment and strong support provided by the diverse group of stakeholders were evident throughout the stakeholder interviews. As described by one stakeholder, “this is the Mayor’s priority, and it’s exciting. It’s challenging, it’s great work where we can see results quickly. And so that’s been a real draw for people.” As an example, when contracting issues threatened to prevent hundreds of sites from opening their doors on time, staff from agencies across the city, including those who were not directly involved in the pre-K expansion effort, offered their support and manpower to DOE and the city. Similarly, several agencies provided invaluable support in raising awareness among families about the expansion, thus contributing to the initiative meeting its enrollment goal.

Furthermore, **key agencies were proactive in making changes** in staffing, policies, and processes to support the rollout efforts more effectively, further exemplifying the level of citywide commitment to making *Pre-K for All* a successful effort. For example, DECE added staff to several of the teams in support of the Year 2 expansion, including DECE coaches who provide direct supports to sites and other field office staff. Efforts have also been made to develop and enhance the internal data infrastructure to facilitate data sharing within DOE and across agencies about the sites and potential applicant families. The family application process was revamped, and a unified process for district schools and NYCEECs was created.

As acknowledged by key stakeholders, many sites—and particularly newly contracted sites—faced an intensive start-up process as they were inundated with a tremendous amount of information. The compressed timeline for the site application, selection, and preparation processes (summer of 2014) was one of the most significant and acknowledged challenges of the expansion rollout. The process and supports were strengthened in Year 2 and included an earlier start to site recruitment, streamlined communications with approved sites in which requests and information were channeled through a main DOE contact, and the provision of additional information about expectations for high-quality programs.

The final research question in this implementation study asked about lessons learned for future expansion and about consequences for city agencies and sustainability. Agency stakeholders and DECE staff identified the following areas for consideration in future expansion:

Family outreach and enrollment

- The city and DOE should continue to raise awareness of the initiative, emphasizing the fact that all sites follow the same guidelines, rules, and expectations. This would address the perception that NYCEECs may not offer the same quality programming as district schools.
- To ensure the success of the expansion efforts, the DOE should continue to use several strategies that were found to be particularly successful in the initiative's first year, including market research strategies to inform outreach, a dedicated outreach team to support sites in recruiting families, and a citywide community awareness campaign.

Site application and support

- Stakeholders stressed the importance of conducting additional neighborhood needs assessments to better identify high-priority areas as well as areas that may be saturated.
- The **supports provided to sites** for program start-up should be continued and expanded to ensure that sites, particularly newly contracted sites, are ready by the start of the school year. For example, newly contracted sites would benefit from additional training and information on the operational and business-related aspects of programming.
- To support the expansion of sites and full-day pre-K seats, the city should continue to **strengthen the teacher pipeline**, for example by: supporting the development or continuation of early childhood certification pathways programs such as the Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Preparation Project, continuing the staff recruitment supports for sites provided by the DOE Office of Teacher Recruitment and Quality, and developing the hiring capacity of the NYCEECs by providing broader access to DOE's Teacher Finder Tool and facilitating hiring events for NYCEECs where directors can meet potential candidates.
- Key stakeholders agreed that future efforts need to focus on quality. To ensure high-quality programming, the city, DOE, and ACS will need to continue and potentially expand their internal capacity to provide the supports that sites need to develop their teaching staff and ensure high-quality practices in the area of curriculum and instruction, assessments, and family engagement. DOE has taken important steps in this area by increasing the number of DECE coaches and expanding and differentiating the professional development supports, topics covered in separate evaluation reports. As noted earlier, the **city has engaged in a concerted effort to mitigate the system's inequities stemming from salary differentials** between NYCEECs and district schools and within NYCEECs **and has secured funding from the state to provide more competitive salaries for teachers at NYCEECs**. However, in order to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the *Pre-K for All* initiative, additional funding must be secured to continue to address these inequities.

APPENDIX

Table A-1. Participation in Evaluation Activities, by Type of Site and Program Length

Characteristic of Pre-K Sites	Number of Surveys ¹		Site Visits
	Site Leader	Staff	
ACS New York City Early Education Center	20	74	7
DOE New York City Early Education Center	68	249	19
District school	70	321	13
Charter school	1	3	1
New or newly contracted programs	33	117	11
Converted from half to full day	60	227	15
Existing or expanded full day	66	303	14

¹Site identification was missing for 24 site leaders and 23 staff.