

2017 NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Where the Candidates Stand on Preschool Expansion

Question: For nearly 20 years, thousands of 3- and 4-year-olds in 31 of New Jersey's poorest communities have benefited from a high-quality preschool. Research has shown that children who attend high-quality preschool have significant gains in academics and social and emotional skills. In 2008, the state Legislature approved an expansion of high-quality preschool throughout New Jersey as part of the School Funding Reform Act, but the state never funded this critical mandate. However, this year, the 2018 state budget approved \$25 million for preschool expansion. It is a positive step forward, but in the meantime, high-quality preschool remains out of reach for more than 35,000 3- and 4-year-olds.

If elected, what specific steps will you take during your first year in office to ensure that more New Jersey preschoolers have access to a high-quality learning experience?

Kim Guadagno, Republican Candidate

If the school funding formula could be reformed to ensure millionaires in Hoboken and Jersey City pay their fair share for preschool and school construction, I believe we could expand free preschool to more low-income families across the state. Additionally, my lieutenant governor will lead an audit of all aspects of state government, and force an audit of all school districts in the state to ensure money is actually being used efficiently to improve education in the classroom. If it's not, we could reinvest those savings in education, including preschool. At the very least, pre-K should be means tested.

Phil Murphy, Democratic Candidate

I have been a strong supporter of pre-K dating back to when I chaired a national task force on public education in 2005. New Jersey has historically offered free universal pre-K in a number of low income cities and towns, and studies have shown that it leads to improved long-term educational outcomes. I would support the expansion of pre-K statewide and work to move towards universal access.

Seth Kaper-Dale, Green Party Candidate

Key to my platform is that the state of New Jersey, before it critiques the School Funding Formula, must fund it and see if it works! It is more than an insult—it is downright damaging to the next generation—that the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 has never been fully funded. The shortcoming in services, especially for 3-4yr olds, can be felt in our communities today. As I develop my first budget my eye would be firstly on securing funding for children's education—especially early education. There is still a mindset out there that early-ed is somehow a 'fringe extra' for a privileged society. No—preschool is the foundation upon which a child's brain develops in ways that makes her ready for a lifetime of learning. In addition to using the finally fully-funded education budget to pay for expanded preschool I would encourage communities to consider using NJ's new public bank to fund school expansion programs to build additions to handle preschool classes. NJ's public bank is a way for the state to generate funds at extremely low interest rates that help municipalities meet goals that are good for the public—such as expanded pre-school.