
UP4 West Sac

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Background

Universal Preschool for West Sacramento (UP4 West Sac) is a new effort in Yolo County to provide free, voluntary, high quality preschool to all 4-year-old children in West Sacramento. After two years of planning, First 5 Yolo, the City of West Sacramento and Washington Unified School District are now initiating the program. In September 2006, UP4 West Sac will provide 111 four-year old children with exceptional preschool experiences. By 2011, spaces will be available for 485 West Sacramento children, and by 2016, 100% of 4-year-olds in West Sacramento will have access to free preschool.

At the core of the initiative is a focus on *high quality* preschool. Quality preschool experiences promote language, physical, social and emotional growth, all of which prepare young children for kindergarten and elementary school. In fact, a recent RAND Corporation report predicts that if Universal Preschool were established across the Central Valley, we would have 1,600 fewer high school dropouts annually, 2,200 retained in their grade, 10,100 fewer years of special education and 2,200 fewer criminal charges against juveniles. Currently, no public or private preschool provider in West Sacramento meets the quality standards required by UP4 West Sac. As a result, providers will be given financial incentives to raise the quality of their centers, and individual teachers will have opportunities to increase their training and education.

Needs of West Sacramento Children

West Sacramento, population 38,000, is home to a diverse mix of residents. The city is comprised of significant populations of Latino, Russian and East Asian immigrants, with 38% of households speaking a language other than English. West Sacramento parents who choose to send their children to preschool must spend 10-15% of their monthly income per child. Five out of eight West Sacramento elementary schools are listed by the State as “low performing,” based on low levels of student proficiency. At those same five schools, 76% of students qualify as low-income or in poverty.

Universal Preschool for West Sacramento will provide high quality and nurturing environments for four-year-old children. UP 4 West Sac preschool programs will enable children to optimize their natural capacities for learning, social interaction and creative expression, thereby preparing them for successful participation in the educational system. Preschool programs will be offered in a variety of settings, including public and private schools, child development centers, family childcare homes and Head Start programs. All programs will meet research-based standards for social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development designed to foster success in school.

A Joint Project of First 5 Yolo, City of West Sacramento & Washington Unified School District



Expected Outcomes

As a result of the establishment of Universal Preschool in West Sacramento, we expect a wide-ranging and interconnecting set of results, including:

- ◆ Improvement of Preschool Quality: Preschool providers will offer higher quality programs, including the level of teacher education and teacher to child ratios.
- ◆ Workforce Development: Preschool teachers and childcare providers will complete further training and education. UP 4 West Sac will establish classes in West Sacramento, facilitating the completion of ECE credentials, AA degrees and BA degrees among teachers.
- ◆ Inter-Program Alignment & Collaboration: Teachers and directors from State Preschool, Head Start, and private centers will participate in quality improvement, establishing an ongoing dialogue about new strategies and increased commitment to quality care.
- ◆ Student Academic Improvement: Universal Preschool “graduates” will enter Kindergarten competent and ready to learn. They will have experience with classroom instruction, use of numbers and letters and an ability to shift between social and instructional time.
- ◆ Improvement in Students’ Lives: In attaining academic success, UP4 West Sac graduates will benefit from heightened self-esteem, good health, academic mastery, social proficiency and an increased likelihood for post-high school education.
- ◆ Parent Involvement in the Educational Process: Through participation in meetings, parent trainings and classroom activities, preschool parents will recognize their role as providers of learning in their own homes and advocates for their children’s experience in public schools.

Partners In Success

UP4 West Sac is a collaborative project between the City of West Sacramento, First 5 Yolo, Washington Unified School District, Yolo County Office of Education, City of Davis Child Care Services Resource & Referral, Los Rios Community College District, California State University, Sacramento and West Sacramento Preschool and Childcare Providers. First 5 Yolo serves as the administrative home for the program.

Recently, the West Sacramento Universal Preschool Task Force, in existence since 2003, transformed into the UP4 West Sac Advisory Committee. This committee, composed of nine partner members with expertise in early childhood education, program administration, financial planning, and workforce development, meets monthly to provide direction and guidance to UP4 West Sac staff. Meetings are open to the public.

Launching Universal Preschool in West Sacramento will mean a new way of doing business for preschool providers and preschool families. Though most large metropolitan California communities are currently initiating Universal Preschool programs, smaller cities face a unique set of challenges. In this way, UP4 West Sac is establishing itself as an exemplary program for smaller municipalities, serving as a model for California’s small cities and towns. With help from a growing range of partners, we will begin to offer all West Sacramento four-year-olds an educational program that provides for their social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical development standards, fostering their future success in school.

For Further Information

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