

FACT SHEET | **Preschool For All**

2015 Budget for a Better Minnesota

Minnesota could be among the first states in the country to offer free, voluntary, half-day early learning programs for every four-year-old – that is, if a proposal from Governor Mark Dayton becomes law this session. If passed, the proposal would allow an estimated 47,300 students to attend preschool in the program’s first year of operation. Within just a few years, the Department of Education predicts that number would grow to roughly 57,000 four-year-olds statewide – giving every kid the great start they need to prepare for kindergarten, and succeed in school and life.

A Great Start for Every Student

- **Preschool for All** – The Governor is proposing a \$173 million investment to provide every four-year-old in Minnesota access to high-quality early learning programs. In its first year of operation, the program would allow an estimated 47,300 four-year-olds to attend preschool. Within just a few years, 57,000 kids would be enrolled in preschool statewide.

Building on Recent Investments

- **Early Learning Scholarships** – Minnesota is already on its way to narrowing achievement gaps, thanks to new investments made in early learning and voluntary, half-day preschool. In fact, early learning scholarships funded by Governor Dayton and the Legislature over the last four years have already provided more than 12,500 early learners access to preschool statewide.
- **Continuing Early Learning Scholarships** – The Governor’s universal pre-kindergarten proposal would continue the early learning scholarship program. Continuing our investment in scholarships, while providing universal access for all four-year-olds, would help ensure more at-risk children can access high-quality preschool opportunities even earlier.
- **Preparing Students for All-Day Kindergarten** – The Governor and Legislature recently invested in all-day kindergarten. Already, in its first year of implementation, [99.6 percent of kids in Minnesota](#) are going to kindergarten all-day – giving them the great start they need to succeed in school. Investing in preschool opportunities for all Minnesota kids will help ensure every four-year-old arrives at all-day kindergarten prepared to learn.

Addressing a Serious Need

- **Persistent Achievement Gaps** – For years, Minnesota has faced persistent achievement gaps between white students and students of color, and students who live in poverty. But a growing body of research shows that giving kids a great early start is the best strategy to close those gaps, and help all students achieve their greatest potential.
- **Life-Changing Impacts** – Participation in high-quality pre-kindergarten education programs can dramatically impact the lives of Minnesota children. Nationally, research has found that at-risk children who do not participate in early learning initiatives are 25 percent more likely to drop-out of school.

Proven Results

- **Huge Return on Investment** – Leading researchers and economists have found that high-quality early learning programs can yield long-term benefits of as much as \$16 for every \$1 invested. Most of those cost savings are in education, human services, and justice system savings, as well as increased tax revenues.
- **Better Student Achievement** – Studies have shown that early learning programs have impressive and long-lasting benefits for low-income students, including increased high school graduation and employment rates, and decreased incarceration rates.

Saving Families Money

- **No More Out-of-Pocket Expenses** – Sending every four-year-old to preschool would not only give our kids a great start; it would help families too. Pre-kindergarten programs for all Minnesota students would put thousands of dollars back in families' pockets every year. Parents would no longer have to pay out-of-pocket for preschool, and they would be able to avoid the high costs of child care while their children attend preschool programs.
- **Avoiding Child Care Costs** – Right now, Minnesota is the third-most expensive state in the nation for child care. On average, child care for one four-year-old in Minnesota costs \$922 per month, or \$11,068 per year. Helping parents avoid those costs, while ensuring kids are receiving high-quality learning opportunities, is an investment that will pay off for tens of thousands of Minnesota families, and produce better results for our students.