

Early Start CT: Preschool for All

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL
ENDOWMENT



Office of Early Childhood

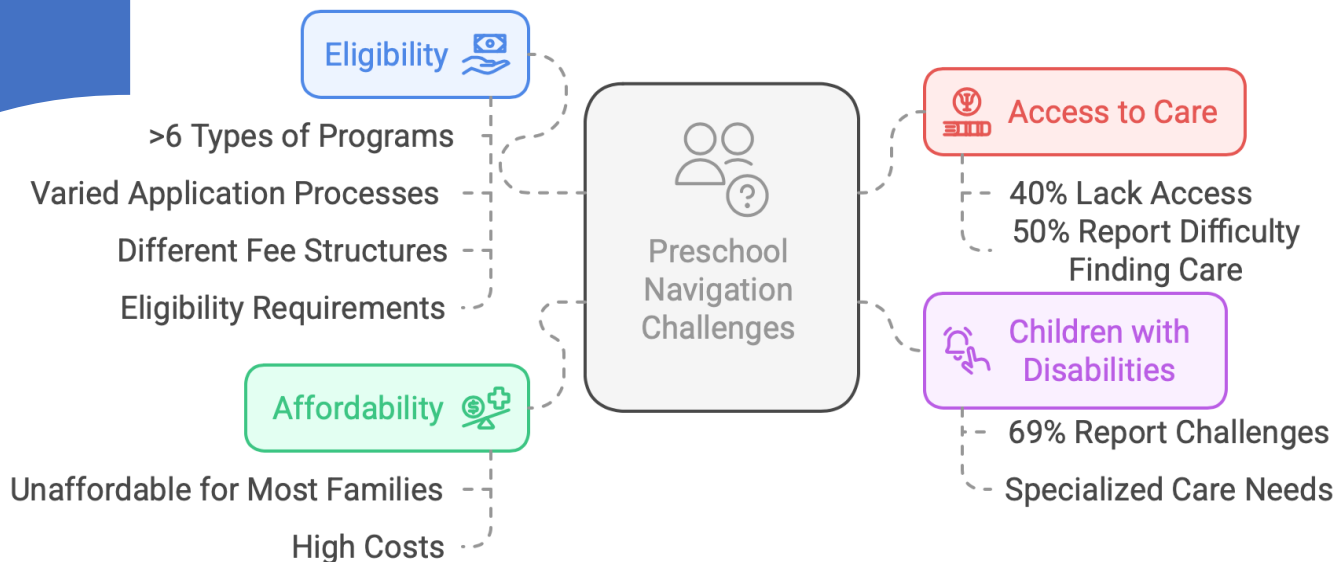
What's the Problem?

- Not all children in Connecticut have access to high-quality preschool before kindergarten.
- Parents want their children ready for school but often can't afford high-quality preschool that aligns with work hours.
- ECE classrooms across the state are closed due to lack of staff, driven by low wages for ECE teachers.
- Lack of preschool access impedes labor force participation of parents.
- District programming for preschoolers with special education needs often has limited hours/days/locations.
- The current system is fragmented, making it challenging for families to navigate.



Current State of Preschool Enrollment for Families

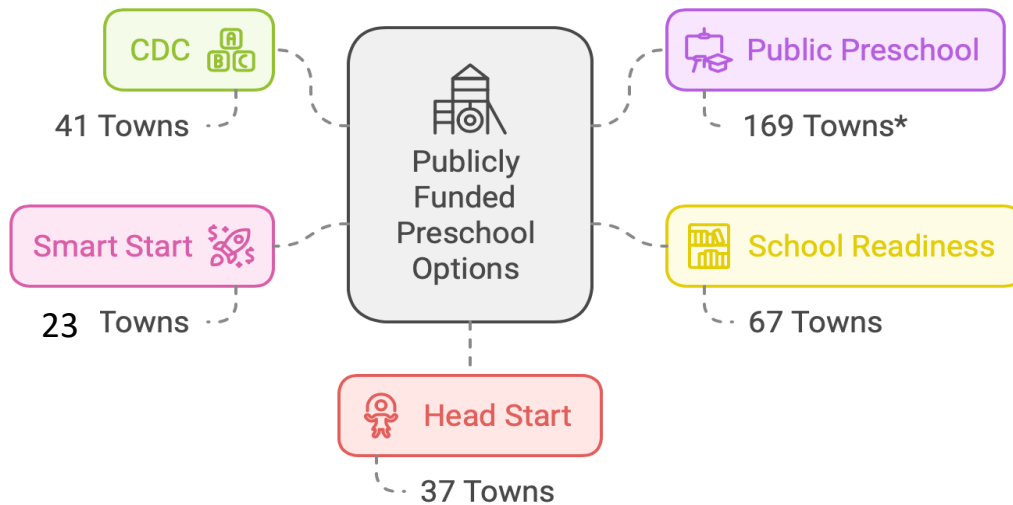
System is Confusing for Parents



Current State of State and Federally Funded Connecticut Preschool

Access to affordable preschool largely dependent on where you live, or if your child qualifies for special education.

Access Driven by Geography More than by Family Need



85 towns do not have a CDC, SR, Smart Start or Head Start



Guiding Principles

Mixed Delivery – Public Schools, Child Care Centers, Group Child Care Homes & Family Child Care Homes

OEC and SDE collaboration

Common quality standards and ongoing quality improvement

Teacher qualifications and Accreditation

Coaching for ECE quality and supporting students with Special Ed. Needs (SDE & OEC)

Assure that infant and toddler child care is supported

Workforce compensation to increase in alignment with public schools

Allows time for planning (community planning, facility needs, program alignment)

Feedback from parents in design



Early Start CT Preschool Expansion Features:

Affordable or free high-quality preschool

Simple, easy to access, and flexible to meet family needs

Fair and data driven with community planning and decision making

Capitalizes on the Blue Ribbon Panel Early Start CT system improvements

Creates 20,000 new or extended day preschool spaces by 2032 and lowers the cost for families who are currently enrolled in 19,000 current preschool spaces by 2028

Strengthens the whole birth through 5 early childhood system with funding to assure parity and stability for infant and toddler care

Supports Connecticut's economy and the early childhood workforce



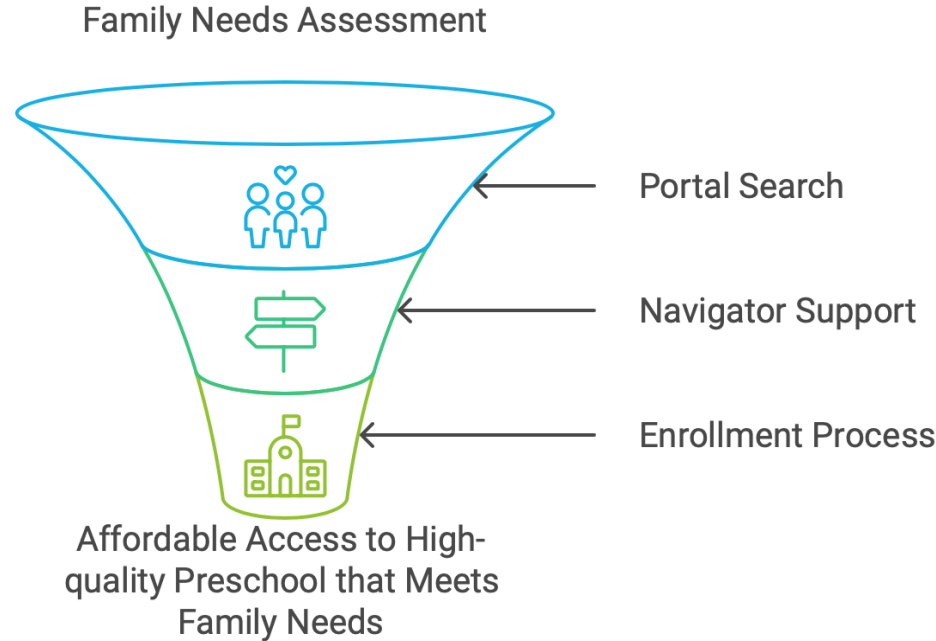
Improves Affordability, Access, Quality



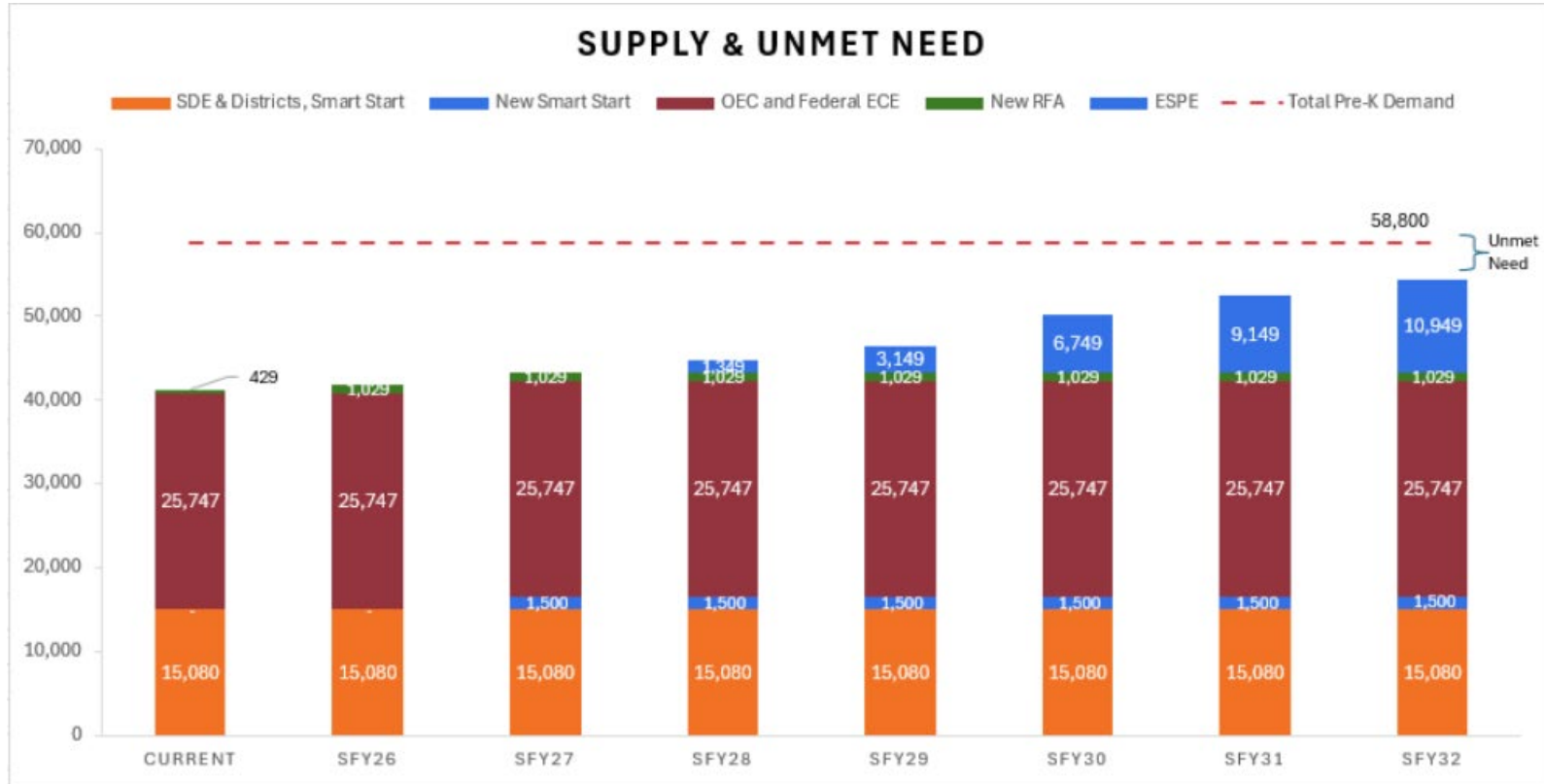
- **Expand preschool options** for families
 - free for families making up to \$100,000 per year *
 - \$20 per day maximum for families making up to \$150,000
- **A trust fund** approach with sustainable funding and playful expansion
- **Builds on current local, state, federal funds/programs** to fill gaps, and extend the length of the day for working families
- **New Parent Portal** links parents to all Birth–5 Early Start options to best meet their needs. Data to help system expansion planning
- **Improves the whole system** with ECE workforce development, market rates, preschool quality supports, and holds babies harmless



Will help families with a state-of-the-art enrollment system



Expanded Access for Preschool Children Over Time

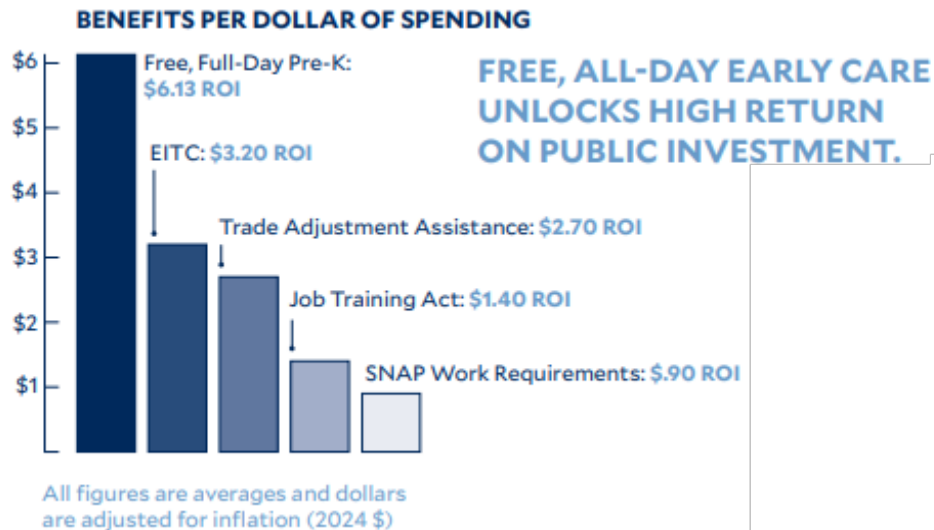


Not represented in this graph:
Model includes funding for 7500 preschoolers to move from part day to school day

Preschool Access Increases Parental Employment, Income

New Haven Preschool Study

- Parents made, on average, \$7,200 more per year when their children were enrolled. Reduced out of pocket expenses \$4500 per year. (net \$11,700)
- The value of preschool was especially pronounced for low/moderate-income families, just out of reach of current subsidies
- Educational gains persisted for at least 6 years



Evidence: Impact of Preschool Access for Children

Education Commission of the States Summarizing 15 studies at state level (2020)

- 15 research studies find significantly more long-term positive outcomes — extending beyond kindergarten.

Oklahoma, Tulsa (2022) – Oklahoma was the first state with UPK

- Long-term positive outcomes for children enrolled in preschool in 2005:
 - Compared to their peers, children who attended preschool were more likely to take advanced courses, graduate high school on time, more likely to enroll in a higher education program, more likely to vote after turning 18.
- Third graders who attended preschool had stronger self-regulation skills, performed better in math.

DC UPK (2018)

- More than 92% of early childhood students at DCPS are meeting or exceeding developmental expectations.
- Maternal labor force participation increased 10% related to UPK expansion.



Lessons Learned from Other States and Cities

Common State/City UPK Challenges	CT's System Addresses Challenges
Limited commitment (e.g. 10 hrs week, no 3s...)	30+ hours per week with options for families based on their needs. Designed for 3s and 4s
Undermines infant and toddler care	Resources allotted for infant and toddler rate parity
Sustainable Funding, ongoing expansion	Trust fund for long-term sustainability
Quality and Workforce Development	Supports cost of high quality ; including workforce development, apprenticeships, scholarships, rates, coaching
Fairness	Decisions informed by community needs assessments, parent needs and rolled out over time to allow for planning
Enrollment	Statewide parent portal plus and trusted local parent navigators
Facilities	Sets aside funding for improvements and expansion
Implementation	Public/Private approach ; builds on Early Start reforms underway, funding to have increased rates for IT in alignment with prek



Neighboring States



State	Commitment	Preschool Expansion/Universal Status	Challenges
Massachusetts	Expanding access focus on equity and quality	In progress in 26 Gateway cities	Funding and statewide scale
Vermont	Act 166 offers publicly funded preschool	Yes, 10 hours weekly	Limited hours, systemic integration
New Hampshire	Focus on targeted programs	No	Limited funding and coverage
Maine	Voluntary pre-K for 4-year-olds	In progress	Uneven district participation and low funding
Rhode Island	High-quality State Pre-K Program	In progress	Funding for universal access
New Jersey	Building on Abbott Program for high-poverty areas for 3s and 4s	In progress	Expanding statewide
New York	Universal Pre-K program with strong urban success	In progress (NYC: Yes)	Uneven access outside NYC

