

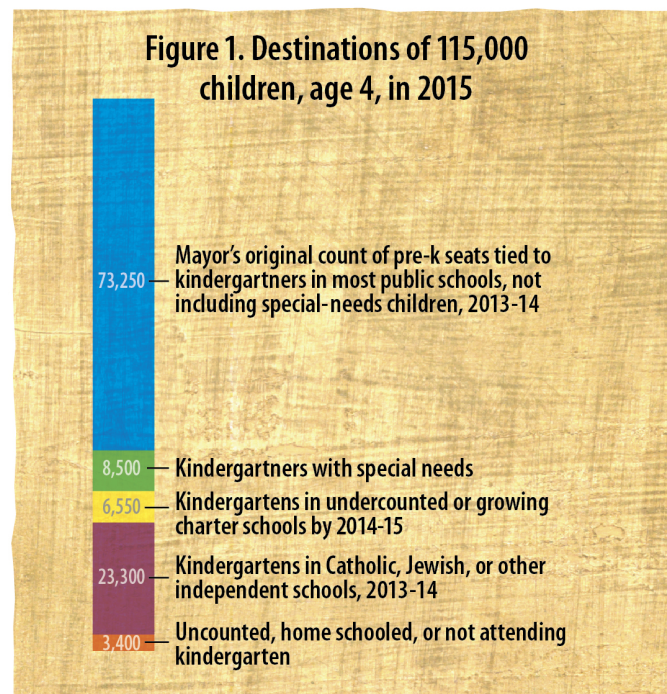
Failing to Count Children Entering Catholic, Charter, and Jewish Schools, New York May Fall Short of Universal Pre-K



University of California
BERKELEY
IHD INSTITUTE OF
HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

Pre-K for Which Children? The City's 115,000 Four Year-Olds

Mayor Bill de Blasio – expanding to about 70,000 classroom seats citywide – promises to deliver free preschool to all four year-olds. He hopes to reach this goal by late summer, creating 17,000 new seats before the 2015-16 school year gets underway.



The city's original estimate that 73,250 seats would provide universal access to pre-k stemmed from counts of children entering kindergartens located in district or charter schools, perhaps at first assuming that UPK would grow mainly in public schools.¹

We find no evidence that the mayor's present target of 70,000 seats takes into account the 23,300 four year-olds who enter kindergartens hosted by Catholic, Jewish, and other independent schools.

Mr. de Blasio's current target also fails to account for about 6,550 children who enter the expanding range of kindergartens run by charter schools. Each set

of uncounted four year-olds is eligible for UPK funding. Their schools or affiliated community organizations already draw significant dollars from the mayor's program.

Missing Four Year-Olds

Figure 1 details the kindergarten destinations of the 115,000 four year-olds that presently inhabit the city, according to the Census Bureau. The mayor's working group initially estimated that 73,250 pre-k seats would be required to yield universal access – matched to the number of children entering kindergarten within publicly funded schools. This count set aside youngsters with disabilities, who would not be well served in regular classrooms.

The 73,250 figure included 12,681 four year-olds served by other subsidized programs in 2013-14, most funded by the Administration for Children's Services. The University of California has filed a legal request asking the city to disaggregate this count (broken

down by community), since we know that about 28,000 four year-olds residing in the poorest two-fifths of city zip codes still remain outside the mayor's UPK program.² We don't know what share is served by other child-care or pre-k efforts.

The largest set of uncounted four year-olds includes those who enter kindergartens hosted by independent schools. This equaled about 23,300 children in the 2013-14 school year, according to data reported to the state department of education.³ These counts are broken down by school affiliation in Figure 2.

Independent schools host pre-k programs, which can qualify for city funding under the mayor's initiative.

While many parents of these 23,300 preschoolers have already expressed demand for the mayor's program, they remain uncounted as the mayor sticks to his 70,000-seat target – a number of spaces that will not result in universal access.

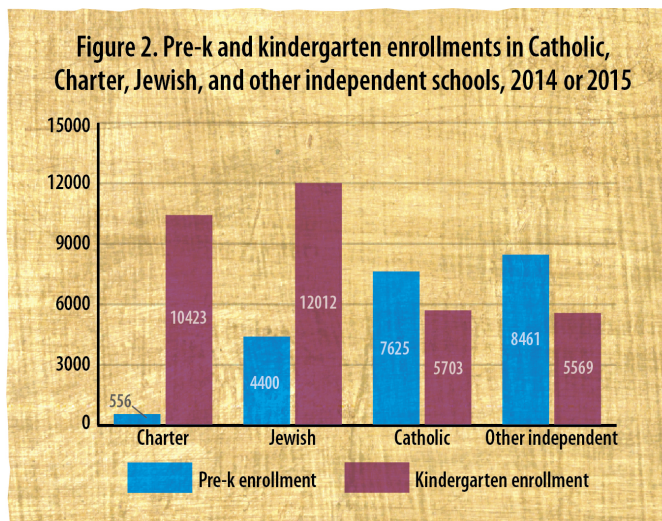
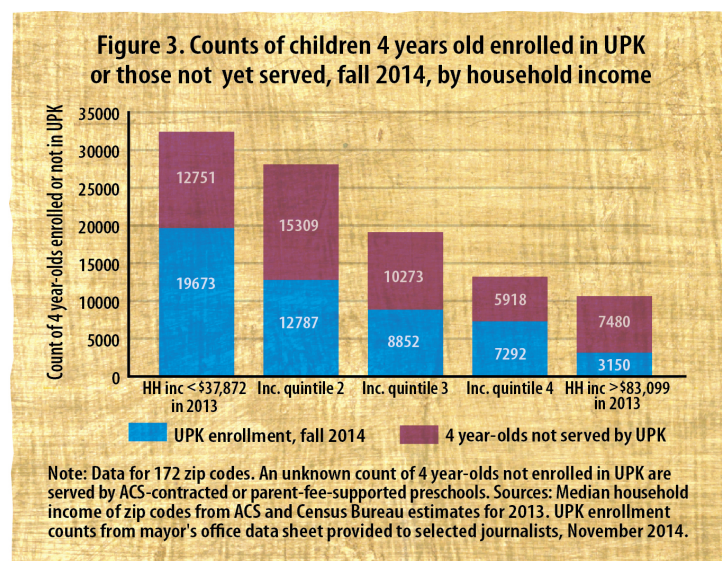


Figure 2 also shows the number of kindergartners hosted by charter schools. About 6,550 of these children are not counted in the mayor's 70,000-seat target.⁴

Can Poor Families Compete?

The mayor could achieve his goal during a third year of expansion (2016-17). But in the meantime children residing in low-income areas will compete with peers for rationed pre-k spaces, many coming from better-heeled families.



Just over 28,000 children in the poorest two-fifths of the city's zip codes remain outside the mayor's UPK effort (Figure 3).

As pre-k seats are created across diverse neighborhoods, the distribution of new facilities and expressed demand by parents may handicap poor children. Affordable space for new classrooms remains scarce in the

most densely populated, lower-income parts of the city. We earlier detailed how the rate at which parents apply for UPK covaries with community wealth as well.⁵

Technical Notes: Tracking New York City's Four Year-Olds

You can easily derive the count of 4 year-olds that reside in New York City, anchored to the Census Bureau estimate for 2013.

1. Go to the Census Bureau link and click 'Detailed Tables':
http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/data_main/
2. At the top of screen locate the box labeled, 'state, county, or place' and type in 'New York City.' Click the 'Topics' box on left. Click 'People' in the box that appears, then 'Age Groups,' then 'Children.'
3. Close the 'Special Topics' box. You will see the main screen. Scroll down to 'Population under 18 years of age' and select that category (809001, three-year estimate). Click 'View' at the bottom of the page.

You will see the count of 3 and 4 year-olds for 2013. Divide by 2. To estimate the count of 4 year-olds citywide for 2015, simply apply the annual (compounded) population growth rate of 2.8% per year, reflecting actual child-population growth between 2010 and 2013.

This yields a total count of 115,613 children, 4 years of age, across New York City for 2015.

Text Notes

¹ See [page 2](#) and endnote 1 in: Office of the Mayor (January, 2014). Ready to launch: New York City's implementation plan for free, high quality universal pre-kindergarten. New York City. The Deputy Mayor reiterated in a [letter](#) to preschools dated February 18, 2015 that the city intends to "reach full scale by the 2015-16 school year."

² This comparison of the mayor's enrollment counts relative to Census Bureau estimates of four year-olds by city zip code appears in our earlier research [brief](#): Fuller & Castillo (2015). Expanding preschool in New York City: Lifting poor children or middling families? Berkeley: Institute of Human Development, University of California.

³ Complete [counts](#) of pre-k and kindergarten enrollees for the city's independent schools are available from the state Department of Education.

⁴ These pre-k enrollment counts for charter schools do not include children attending preschools operated by community-based organizations affiliated with a charter school, as detailed by staff at the New York City Charter School Center.

⁵ Fuller & Castillo (2015), page 9.

This brief, the third examining New York City's effort to widen access to quality preschool, is coauthored by Bruce Fuller and Elise Castillo at the Institute of Human Development, University of California, Berkeley. We warmly thank staff at the New York City Independent Budget Office, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Charter School Center who shared their data and local knowledge, along with the University of California Education Evaluation Center for their funding. Earlier research briefs appear at: <http://dev.gse.pantheon.berkeley.edu/expanding-preschool-new-york-city>.