Losing the Best

Community Based Organizations Outperform Public Schools in Providing High-Quality Early Childhood Education but Face Instability due to Funding Disparities

March, 2016
Background
Community based organizations, including the settlement houses and community centers that are part of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), are proud to be excellent providers of early childhood education. From 2014-16, the City and community-based providers have worked with Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration to expand access to high-quality programs for the youngest New Yorkers.

But these very same community based providers who have made Pre-K for All a success are struggling to keep programs open and retain excellent staff.

Salaries for the teachers, staff and directors in community-based early-childhood programs earn far less than their similarly-credentialed counterparts in the public schools. Many staff leave community-based programs for higher paying jobs with New York City Department of Education.

Steps to Stabilize Community Based Early Childhood Education

- Immediately establish salary parity for the early childhood workforce. The City funds early-childhood education in both public schools and community based organizations. The City should provide funding to ensure non-profit providers can offer salaries on par with the Department of Education.

- Increase the EarlyLearn rate to fully fund the cost of care. EarlyLearn programs provide a full day of care for low-income, working families, but do not receive the funds necessary to completely cover the cost. The City should increase the EarlyLearn rate to cover the cost of providing high-quality service.

- Improve enrollment procedures. The City should work with community based organizations to ensure parents know where child care slots are available and can easily access them.

Salary Disparities for New York City’s Early Childhood Educators:

In a survey conducted by the Day Care Council of New York, 51% of community based early childhood education providers have lost a certified teacher to the Department of Education over the last two years. In the same survey, 56% of community based early childhood education providers reported they were operating with certified teacher vacancies.

Community-Based Organizations Outperformed Public Schools in Nine out of Ten Metrics

The City used two well respected evaluation systems to assess the performance of individual pre-k programs. Community-based providers outperformed public schools in nine out of ten metrics.

ECERS, The Early Childhood Rating Scale, evaluates environments based on seven attributes\(^1\). Assessments take place over a block of three hours, ideally sampled from the most active part of the day. These observations comprise all of the data upon which this scale is based\(^2\). ECERS is used by Quality Stars NY, Smart Start in North Carolina, NYC Pre-K for All, and Delaware Stars for Early Success.\(^3\), \(^4\), \(^5\), \(^6\)

Data from New York City Department of Education: Pre K Program Assessments.
http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/support/assessments.htm

CLASS, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, was created by TeachStone, and evaluates environments based on the quality of emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support\(^7\). Reviewers conduct 20-minute observations in these categories repeated throughout the day to measure teacher-child interactions\(^8\). CLASS is used by Quality Stars NY, Head Start, Smart Start, and NYC Pre-K for All.\(^9\), \(^10\), \(^11\), \(^12\)

Salary parity data at left compiled by UNH from:
http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/support/assessments.htm


City of New York. City Announces Steps To Help Community-Based Pre-K Programs Attract And Retain High-Quality Educators. April 14, 2014. on.nyc.gov/1RMb3rD

See full chart at bit.ly/21zQ8lK


\(^2\)Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, Early Childhood Environment Rating, 7.

\(^3\)“QUALITYstarsNY FAQ,” QUALITYstarsNY.

\(^4\)“Professional Development & Workforce,” Smart Start.

\(^5\)“Pre-K Program Assessments,” NYC Department of Education.

\(^6\)“Preparing for Your Assessment,” Delaware Stars for Early Success.

\(^7\)“Why CLASS? Exploring the Promise,” 13, 18.

\(^8\)CLASS,” Brookes Publishing Co.

\(^9\)“QUALITYstarsNY FAQ,” QUALITYstarsNY.

\(^10\)“Use of Classroom Assessment,” Head Start.

\(^11\)“Professional Development & Workforce,” Smart Start.

\(^12\)“Pre-K Program Assessments,” NYC Department of Education.
United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is New York City’s federation of settlement houses and community centers and promotes and strengthens a neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live.

UNH member agencies are a major part of New York City’s early-childhood education system with 53 center-based programs providing care through contracts with Administration for Children’s Services, five networks of home-based family child-care providers, 57 pre-k programs and currently serves 2,309 pre-kindergarten students.

For more information, please contact Gregory Brender, Co-Director of Policy and Advocacy, at gbrender@unbny.org or visit our website at www.unbny.org

UNH is a founding member of Campaign for Children - a coalition of more than 150 organizations working to ensure high-quality, stable early childhood education and after-school systems for every child in New York City. For more information, please visit www.campaignforchildrennyc.com