

Universal Preschool for West Sacramento (UP4WS)

West Sacramento, California – Mayor Christopher Cabaldon

Increase Access to High Quality ECE | Program

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A. City Information

City Population	48,744 (US Census Bureau)
Population under 18 years	13,036 (27%)
Population under 5 years	4,094 (8.4%)
Total number of school districts in the city	1
Total number of students within the district in the city	7,421
Number of students that receive Free or Reduced Lunch	3,792(51%)
Total number of schools within the school district	11

Governance Structure: Under state law, no California City or its mayor may have any legal authority over governance of a school district, or the power to appoint a superintendent or school board members. The Washington Unified School District is coterminous with the City of West Sacramento, and is governed by a five-member board of education elected at-large to four-year terms. The board appoints the superintendent. The district is funded primarily by its own share of local property taxes and funds appropriated by the state. Mayor Cabaldon appoints the two city council members of the 2x2 liaison committee between the council and school board. He exerts indirect influence on the district through shared facilities, joint programs, grant coordination, public will, and periodic school bond and parcel tax campaigns. For 14 years, he has recruited and supported candidates for school board seats, with success fluctuating between 40 percent and 80 percent of the board.

B. Purpose

The initial purpose of UP4WS (Universal Preschool for West Sacramento) was to offer free, high quality preschool to every four year old in West Sacramento. The program has now expanded in a modified form to also provide early education programs to infants and toddlers. While no longer entirely free, UP4WS now offers highly subsidized preschool programs to all 0-5 year old children in the City of West Sacramento, with a focus on underserved communities, particularly low income families and children who are Dual Language Learners. The city's program began operation in 2005. UP4WS is an innovative public partnership administered by the City of West Sacramento, designed to increase educational opportunities for children and eliminate the achievement gap by providing access to high quality preschool education to all West Sacramento children.

According to Helen Thomson, Chair of First 5 Yolo County Children and Families, UP4WS has documented how access to quality preschool closed the achievement gap between English Language learners and English speaking children. By the end of the school year (first year of UP4WS), there was no significant difference in social / emotional or cognitive skill levels between those children who came into the classroom speaking English as their primary language and those who didn't.

Through UP4WS, preschool & childcare programs are provided funding to meet identified quality standards and, in turn, provide a 3.5 hour subsidized program to eligible preschoolers. The goal of UP4WS is to provide high quality preschool and childcare for all children ages 0-5 in the City of West Sacramento at little cost to residents through significant subsidies.

The vision of Universal Preschool for West Sacramento is to provide high quality environments and programs that will enable children to optimize their natural capacities for learning, social interaction, and creative expression; preparing children for meaningful, lifelong participation in the education system.

C. Outcomes

Since its inception, the program has achieved its four top-priority goals:

1. Improve the access and availability of no-cost preschool for all 4-year-olds (first year onwards)
2. Raise the quality of participating preschool programs in West Sacramento
3. Increase college preparation and licensure of quality teachers
4. Elevate preschool teachers to commensurate professional wage levels with their elementary school counterparts

Outcomes: As of May 2014, over 3,500 children have been served by UP4WS. Starting in 2006, UP4WS began with 135 children and now serves over 500 children per year. The program has increased the number of preschool spaces within the city from 210 to 780 largely due to the growth of the UP4WS program and the improvement in access to childcare and preschool. Whether a child is cared for in a home-based child care, or a licensed child development preschool, the City of West Sacramento is committed to making sure that all learning environments are safe and nurturing.

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Quantitative Measurements¹: All children in UP4WS are assessed using the Desired Results Developmental Profile-Revised (Developed by the California Department of Education) at least twice yearly. Teachers are able to measure individual student growth over the course of the school year across a range of 39 indicators. The table below reflects five indicators with the lowest initial scores (results are from the first year of the program).

Closing the Achievement gap for English Language Learners: The growth exhibited by children who were English Language Learners in letter and word knowledge was particularly impressive. These children had lower pre-scores in the measure of letter and word knowledge in comparison to their English speaking classmates. However, by the end of the first year of the UP4WS program, both groups tested at almost the same level, closing the achievement gap.²

Cost: Mayor Cabaldon worked with the local CA First 5 Commission (First 5 Yolo County) to gather the resources and information needed to apply for funding for the first Power of Preschool grant through First 5 California. The city was selected to receive funding, and at the time, was the smallest geographic region to receive this grant.

The direct and in-kind funding for the program comes from the City of West Sacramento, First 5 Yolo County, First 5 California, the Yolo County Office of Education, Washington Unified School District, Communicare Health Center's Child Development Center, and by smaller grants from the Teichert Foundation, the Wells Fargo Foundation, the Yocha DeHe Tribal Foundation, the Verizon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Thomas P Winn family. The program budget is currently just over a million dollars a year in direct funding, with over \$2.8 million in local matching dollars (direct or in-kind), which is required by the First 5 California grant. The largest contributor is First 5 California, which provides \$913,000 yearly in funding. The City of West Sacramento, and First 5 Yolo each contribute \$100,000.

Washington Unified School District and the Yolo County Office of Education contribute approximately \$1.3 million each in local in kind matching dollars. Additionally, Communicare Health Center contributes \$200,000 in local in kind match dollars. The rest of the program funds are made up of the additional grants listed above, in the amounts of \$5,000-\$15,000 each.

¹ Qualitative measurements: The quality of care given at these programs is excellent by independent program evaluators. Quality rating scales consistently place our classrooms at between 6 and 7 on a rating scale of 1-7 with 7 being the highest possible score. In a state where the current monitoring of centers by Community Care and Licensing is rated among the lowest in the nation, this quality monitoring is not just a good idea, but is vital in order to preserve the integrity of licensed programs.

² See attached Desired Results Developmental Profile – Revised (DRDP-R) Information Page for more information regarding the indicators and rating system designed by the CDOE Child Development Division.

The City of West Sacramento contributes varying amounts of development impact fee funds for facilities and capital improvements. As with all impact fees, under California law, a nexus must be established between the need for the fee and how development contributes to this impact. The City contracted a firm to conduct the nexus study and identified a fee structure that captured the financial impact.

Implementation: Mayor Cabaldon appointed a Universal Preschool Task Force in 2002. The Task Force was chaired by a City Councilperson and charged with finding sustainable funding sources in order to create a comprehensive early education network within West Sacramento.

This Task Force was comprised of: early education experts, school district personnel, medical and health professionals, school board members, Head Start representatives, nonprofit agencies serving children and families, private preschool providers and community members. The work of the Task Force became the template for West Sacramento's application for First 5 California's first round of Power of Preschool grants. The city was granted inclusion in First 5 California's Power of Preschool program, along with eight other counties in 2004.

The 2006-2007 school year was the launch of the UP4WS program, providing free preschool to 62 four-year olds in the City of West Sacramento. During the 2006 – 2007 school year there were 135 total participating children and the number of full scholarships to the program became limited.

Significant subsidies were offered to parents who wanted to enroll their child in an UP4WS program. Head start, state preschool (WUSD), private childcare centers and private family child care that agreed to meet the program quality and environment quality standards of the program received funding to increase the quality of their learning environments, and provide professional development for their teaching staff. The 2007 – 2008 school year saw more preschool providers join UP4WS, expanding the total number of participating children to 310.

There were 435 participating children in the UP4WS program in the 2008-2009 school year and 512 participating children in the UP4WS program in the 2009-2010 school year. The 2010 – 2011 school year saw the introduction of an infant and toddler component to UP4WS, increasing the total number of participating children to 620: 121 infants and toddlers, and 499 pre-K. The 2011-2012 school year saw budget cuts, decreasing the total number of children served to 575.

Although UP4WS is a partnership program with the Washington Unified School District, First 5 Yolo, First 5 CA and the County Office of Education, UP4WS is administered by the city and has been integrated into the fabric of the city. West Sacramento has an Early Learning Services division that oversees the UP4WS program and other early education endeavors. Since the inception of UP4WS, the Mayor has communicated the program's value to both City staff and City Council members in order to increase financial investment by the city.

Currently, the city contributes \$100,000 per year to the program in addition to development impact fees for facilities. Representatives from the partner agencies serve on an Executive Board that oversees and advises staff on the program. A City Council member and community member, both appointed by the Mayor, serve on the UP4WS Executive Board. Members of the community, particularly parents have been enormously supportive of UP4WS.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations for Replication: It is highly unusual for a city the size of West Sacramento to house a division of Early Learning Services which oversees UP4WS, and to promote, improve and connect preschool opportunities within the community. While any city can be a leader in education it needs to have partners who are willing and able to collaborate in order to achieve measurable results.

The City of West Sacramento was selected to receive funding for UP4WS through the first round of Power of Preschool grants provided by First 5 California. At the time, West Sacramento was the smallest geographic region to receive this grant. This unique opportunity positioned West Sacramento to become a model for other smaller cities throughout California to offer a Universal Preschool program. During the exploratory phase in 2003, only larger, urban cities were exploring Universal Preschool, and the concept of offering free preschool for all qualified children within the City of

West Sacramento remains unique to the Sacramento metropolitan area (representing 25 cities and a population of almost two million people).

Mayor Leads, With Support: A Mayor cannot do it alone. He or she needs to gain the support of the City Council. A program such as UP4WS needs to have city staff champions as well. Community support is also paramount. Educating community members about the value of UP4WS and early learning was critical in order to create new groups of stakeholders who fully appreciated its value.

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Outreach and Promotion: Educate others and promote the program to those who are not involved in early learning or may not fully appreciate its value. Share the story with community groups, non-profit agencies and the business community. Point out to the business community that quality preschool is the earliest and one of the best work force development tools. Use parents as advocates; they will have a good story to tell.

Focus on the Outcome: Do not be deterred by negative reactions to what is being done. Have the courage of your convictions. Even though there is plenty of evidence that high quality preschool and early learning programs have significant benefits, there are still some who believe that this is not a role for government much less a city. Try to address their concerns and educate them but don't let this consume you.

D. Mayor's Role – Leader, Political Advocate, Convener

Mayor Cabaldon has been the driving force behind the program since its inception, and has helped lead the expansion and continuation of the program. The Mayor successfully pressed the state's First 5 Commission (First 5 California) in order to direct funding for preschool initiatives. Without this funding there would be no UP4WS or other Power of Preschool Programs (now called Child Signature Program).

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Mayor Cabaldon continues to provide guidance and leadership when re-applying for funding, or finding new ways to grow the program. He has brought the program to the attention of the public through a variety of platforms, including through interviews, speeches and social media. Finally, the City Council, under the Mayor's leadership has had early learning and UP4WS as one of its priority strategic plan programs for two years straight.

E. Attachments

- [UP4WS Report 2013-2014](#)
- [Desired Results Developments Profile Revised \(DRDP-R\)](#)