
Expand Pre-K Eligibility to District Staff

Extending free pre-K eligibility to the children of all district employees to support recruitment and retention

Background

Free public pre-K in Texas is limited to children who meet at least one statutory eligibility criterion, such as being educationally disadvantaged, unable to speak and comprehend English, homeless, in foster care, or the child of an active-duty service member. School districts must serve eligible four-year-olds in full-day programs.¹

Pre-K eligibility for district staff

House Bill 2 (89th Legislature) added the children of classroom teachers employed by the district.² Children of other district employees, including counselors, nurses, librarians, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, front office and cafeteria staff, and administrators, are not eligible.

Many districts have served these families through tuition-based pre-K. Beginning in 2027-28, HB 2 allows a district to offer tuition-based pre-K only if a TEA-designated pre-K intermediary confirms that no eligible private provider can serve the student.³ During the 89th Session, House Bill 494 proposed extending eligibility to the children of all full-time district employees.⁴

Full-day pre-K funding

In 2019, House Bill 3 (86th Legislature) required districts to offer full-day pre-K to eligible four-year-olds, but the state continues to fund pre-K at half-day attendance. HB 2 partially closed the gap by redirecting Early Education Allotment funds, which previously supported early literacy and numeracy in kindergarten through third grade, to pre-K.⁵ The Legislative Budget Board described the result as funding "three-quarter day prekindergarten."⁶ TEA's 2025-26 figures for a typical four-year-old show \$2,794 in Regular Program funding for the half day of attendance and \$2,166 from the Early Education Allotment, leaving a gap of roughly \$628 per student compared with a full day of Regular Program funding.⁷

Policy Priority

Concept: Expand Pre-K eligibility to all district staff children to support recruitment and retention.

TSC's Ask: Amend Texas Education Code §29.153(b) so that the child of any district employee is eligible for free pre-K in the district where the parent works. TSC also supports efforts by other organizations to fully fund mandated full-day pre-K.

Policy Rationale: The Legislature has already recognized pre-K eligibility as a recruitment and retention tool by extending it to classroom teachers in HB 2. Districts also compete to hire and keep counselors, nurses, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and other staff, and many of these employees have young children. Extending eligibility to the children of all district employees would give districts the same tool for every position and would let staff enroll their children in the district where they work.

¹ [Prekindergarten Program FAQs](#), Texas Education Agency.

² [Adopted amendment to 19 TAC §102.1003, High-Quality Prekindergarten Programs](#), Texas Register, February 20, 2026 (implementing TEC §29.153(b) as amended by HB 2).

³ [Pre-K Policies that Passed – or Didn't Pass – During the 2025 Texas Legislative Session](#), Texans Care for Children, July 24, 2025; see also TEC §29.1531(c) as added by HB 2.

⁴ [H.B. 494 \(Goodwin\), as introduced](#), 89th Legislature, Regular Session, relating to the eligibility of the children of public school employees for free prekindergarten programs.

⁵ [House Bill 2 \(HB 2\) Implementation: Foundation School Program \(FSP\) Funding Formula Changes](#), Texas Education Agency, To the Administrator Addressed correspondence, July 10, 2025.

⁶ [Fiscal Note, HB 2 \(Engrossed\)](#), Legislative Budget Board, 89th Legislature, Regular Session, May 14, 2025.

⁷ [Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care](#), Texas Education Agency presentation, April 30, 2026, slide 7 (FSP PreK Funding per Enrolled Student, 2025-26).

Estimated Cost

Cost Formula: Estimated Cost = Additional Four-Year-Olds Enrolled × \$2,794 (half-day Regular Program funding under current law). Because HB 2 distributes a fixed pool of Early Education Allotment funds, added pre-K students would draw from that pool rather than increase it.

Estimated Annual State Cost — Staff Eligibility	
Additional Four-Year-Olds Enrolled	Estimated Cost
1,000	\$2.8 million
2,500	\$7.0 million
5,000	\$14.0 million

Considerations: TEA does not report the number of four-year-old children of non-teaching district staff, so the table shows a range of possible enrollment rather than a single statewide estimate. Some of these children already qualify under another criterion, so the number of newly eligible students would be lower than the total number of staff children. A staff eligibility category would also give districts a way to serve these families once the tuition-based pre-K restrictions take effect in 2027-28. If the Legislature also funds full-day pre-K at full-day attendance, the cost per added student would double to about \$5,588.

Impact on Recapture Districts

Each additional pre-K student would increase the funding entitlement of the district that serves the student. For most districts, the increase would be paid as additional state aid. For districts subject to recapture under Chapter 49, a higher entitlement would reduce the amount of recapture the district owes, allowing more locally raised revenue to remain in the district. Because recapture payments are a method of finance for the state, the reduction in recapture is part of the state cost shown in the estimates above, not a cost in addition to it.

Fiscal estimates are preliminary and illustrative. The per-student amount is TEA's 2025-26 estimate of Regular Program funding for a typical four-year-old pre-K student (92% attendance rate), as presented to the Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care in April 2026. Estimates do not include Tier Two, the Allotment for Basic Costs, or other allotments, so actual costs would be somewhat higher. Enrollment levels are illustrative because statewide counts of district employees' four-year-old children are not available. Actual fiscal notes would depend on legislative language and TEA implementation.

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About Texas School Coalition

The Texas School Coalition is a membership organization that was founded in 1997 to represent property-wealthy independent school districts whose local tax collections are subject to recapture. The mission of the Texas School Coalition is to advocate for the resources to provide all Texas public school students an excellent education and for a school finance system that balances sustainable state and local investments in the best interests of students and taxpayers.