

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and Senate President Sweeney Visit West Deptford School District to Discuss Benefits of Pre-K Funding in State Budget

04/15/2019

Governor's FY2020 Budget Includes an Additional \$68 Million for Preschool Programs

WEST DEPTFORD – Governor Phil Murphy, Senate President Steve Sweeney, and Department of Education Commissioner Lamont Repollet today visited pre-K classrooms at Oakview Elementary School in the West Deptford School District to discuss the benefits of expanding pre-K education. West Deptford has been underfunded since the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 was enacted, but the school funding agreement reached by Governor Murphy and the Legislature last year has increased funding in the district, giving West Deptford additional resources to provide a high-quality education for students in pre-K through grade 12.

Governor Murphy's proposed Fiscal Year 2020 budget includes an additional \$68 million to support existing preschools and expand new preschool programs. FY2019 was the first year West Deptford received state preschool aid, in the amount of \$1,234,310. The Governor's proposed budget for the coming school year would increase preschool aid to the district by 45 percent, with an additional \$560,070 in funding.

"West Deptford is one of numerous communities whose schools and children suffered due to years of being underfunded," **said Governor Murphy**. "Our plan would commit a record level of funding to New Jersey's K-12 schools, and finally set us on the path to fully funding our public schools. Our plan includes additional funding for pre-K, a critical component in improving educational outcomes for our students, a change that will have lasting effects on the future of our state."

"We have made the continued expansion of pre-K a priority because it is one of the most important educational investments we can make," **said Senate President Sweeney**, who represents West Deptford in the Legislature. "Early childhood education provides a foundation for a lifetime of learning. Attending high-quality preschool gives young children the best start toward success in school and in life. Children who have access to pre-K programs enter kindergarten better prepared for school. They are more likely to graduate from high school, go to college and gain the knowledge and skills needed for jobs and careers in the rapidly-evolving workforce."

"This investment in early childhood education is crucial to help foster a child's appetite for education," **said Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet**. "The high-quality preschools that we're establishing and expanding throughout New Jersey are giving thousands of young minds a safe and nurturing environment to learn, grow and explore."

In addition to increased pre-K funding, Governor Murphy's FY2019 budget provided West Deptford with an additional \$616,764, or a five percent increase in K-12 funding for this school year. The Governor's proposed budget for FY2020 would provide the district with another \$255,636 in K-12 aid in FY2020, a two percent increase.

Also benefiting from the Governor's funding initiative is Career and Technical Education and funding for the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering, and math. The FY2020 budget would allocate \$2 million to continue the Computer Science for All initiative; \$1.35 million to support the Liberty Science Center's program that provides science education to schools with high numbers of at-risk students; and \$400,000 for innovative early college programs like the PTECH model announced this year, where schools, community colleges, and businesses collaborate to help students graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree.

The Governor's budget proposal would also increase extraordinary special education aid by \$5 million; ensure no

charter school sees a reduction in aid levels in the coming year; and provides an additional \$108.9 million for payments that the state makes on behalf of school districts, including medical benefits for retired educators, Social Security contributions for teachers, and teacher pensions.

[Back to Top](#)

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[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562019/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562019/approved/news_archive.shtml)

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[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

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