

Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy, Acting Commissioner Dehmer Announce \$11 Million in Funding to Bring High-Quality Preschool to 16 School Districts

03/12/2024

PRINT

As Pre-K students in one classroom cut shapes and practiced their numbers, their counterparts across the hall celebrated St. Patrick's Day a few days early with the recitation of Five Little Shamrocks.

While the significance of a visit by Governor Phil Murphy on Tuesday may have been lost on them, there was no doubting the enjoyment they got out of having someone new to high five and fist bump, to show off the skills they are learning as part of their Pre-K education, laying the foundation for what Murphy, as well as those who joined him, including Acting Commissioner of Education Kevin Dehmer, hope will continue to help New Jersey keep its place atop the list of the best state to raise a family.

Indeed, Murphy's visit was about more than counting and cutting, it was, he said, a reminder of his Administration's commitment to invest in education during the earliest years of formal schooling. Visiting both Millridge School and Clarendon Elementary School, the Governor announced another round of Fiscal Year 2024 (FY2024) Preschool Education Aid (PEA) that will allow an additional 16 school districts across the State to establish or expand high-quality preschool programs.

"Access to early childhood education helps set the tone for the rest of a child's educational career by providing innumerable benefits that will follow young learners throughout their lives," Governor Phil Murphy. "From advanced literacy skills to enhanced social and emotional development, access to high-quality preschool programs has a tangible impact on our children. That is why I am proud to announce continued investments to expand access to preschool for families across the State. Today's announcement builds upon our work to make universal preschool a reality in New Jersey so that more children have the tools and resources necessary to succeed."

The funding is projected to provide 827 additional seats for children to access high-quality preschool education. This second round of funding for FY2024 builds on the \$25 million investment in preschool funding announced last October that provided for an additional 1,715 preschool seats in 26 school districts. High-quality preschools are full-day programs that have a certificated teacher and aide, limited class size, curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, and are inclusive of special needs children, a statement following the visits shared.

"We know that high-quality preschool sets the foundation for a child's success and is linked to improved student outcomes for years to come," Dehmer added, a conversation piece that dominated the discussion Murphy led with three parents of Secaucus children during his second school visit of the day. "That's why bringing high-quality preschool to more communities can be so transformative, and one that is well worth our investment."

The announcement of the funding, Murphy would say, is just one more step in efforts to eventually offer universal preschool across the State, providing every three- and four-year-old child in New Jersey with access to free, full-day preschool. This goal, the statement noted, is being buttressed in the Governor's latest budget which proposes an additional \$124 million for preschool education, including \$20 million to expand high-quality, full-day preschool programs into new school districts.

 [Back to top](#)

Since taking office, Governor Murphy has increased preschool funding by over \$427 million and added more than 14,600 preschool seats in New Jersey school districts, the statement said.

Secaucus Mayor Michael Gonnelli joined the tours, staying mostly in the background except to say that he was thankful that his community's school system was chosen to receive pre-K Expansion Aid. The investment in early education, Gonnelli would confirm, is a factor many potential residents consider in determining where to lay down routes and raise their families, and provides his municipality a leg up in this regard.

While Murphy, Dehmer and the local administrators that joined in the tours, including Erick Alfonso, Ed.D., M.B.A., Superintendent of Secaucus Public Schools, would tout studies that show the positive economic impact of investment into early childhood education, for the parents that participated in the conversation the impact of the education opportunity is something that hits them right at their kitchen tables.

Amanda Ambrosio is a lifelong resident of Secaucus, and the mother of three daughters, between the ages of six and two. Having the access to full day preschool, she said, not only gives the girls a strong foundation for their future educations, it also means she and her husband, the owner of a small trucking business, can spend more time growing that.

Much newer to Secaucus are Hasintha Ariyaratna and Sanduni Jayanetti, who, along with their four-year-old daughter has made the community home after emigrating from Sri Lanka for his work at the United Nations. Well before making the move across the globe just over 12 months ago, the new parents did their research and considered a number of potential locations, including in New York, and determined that the school ratings their new home has earned made it their best final destination.

Helping today's students is just the first step in a much longer-ranging plan, Alfonso would conclude.

"This move towards inclusive education reflects our dedication to nurturing the potential of every child," Alfonso said, extending his gratitude to Murphy. "It fosters a community where every family has the support and resources to thrive. Together, we are building a brighter, more equitable future for Secaucus."

Steve Lenox, TAPinto

VIDEO

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/cxxu1bxv1xbpc8fe58ew/h?rlkey=8isyod289heu6pfreh1zjah4a&dl=0>
([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nz32dl/7ys5259b/f5u187_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!N1ARWC79CnvSyW-DPk0zJIMlpZvd002zhdPpCa3FAf1T8yBZe73AEr6TAf06lYFamsS00aLo_mptGAg1Hra9TeDn\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nz32dl/7ys5259b/f5u187_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!N1ARWC79CnvSyW-DPk0zJIMlpZvd002zhdPpCa3FAf1T8yBZe73AEr6TAf06lYFamsS00aLo_mptGAg1Hra9TeDn$))

News 12 New Jersey

PHOTO

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy/albums/72177720315404793/>
([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nz32dl/7ys5259b/vxv187_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!N1ARWC79CnvSyW-DPk0zJIMlpZvd002zhdPpCa3FAf1T8yBZe73AEr6TAf06lYFamsS00aLo_mptGAg1HtYIM6Zw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nz32dl/7ys5259b/vxv187_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!N1ARWC79CnvSyW-DPk0zJIMlpZvd002zhdPpCa3FAf1T8yBZe73AEr6TAf06lYFamsS00aLo_mptGAg1HtYIM6Zw$))

Governor's Office

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

[Administration](#)

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Tahesha Way \(/governor/admin/lt\)](#)

[In memoriam of Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt-sheila-y-oliver\)](#)

[Senior Staff \(/governor/admin/staff\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet\)](/governor/admin/cabinet)

[Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy \(/governor/climateaction/\)](/governor/climateaction/)

[Office of Equity \(/governor/admin/equity/\)](/governor/admin/equity/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca\)](/governor/admin/bca)

[New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission \(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/\)](https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Fellows Program \(/governor/admin/fellows\)](/governor/admin/fellows)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[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 \(/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

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

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](//www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](//www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

[\(//nj.gov/opra/\)](//nj.gov/opra/)

[\(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login\)](https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

[\(https://tech.nj.gov/\)](https://tech.nj.gov/)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2024
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000