

October 22, 2026

RESOLUTION TO ADVANCE UNIVERSAL PRE-K AND STRENGTHEN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, the Chicago Board of Education is committed to ensuring that every young child has access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities that meet the diverse needs of Chicago families;

WHEREAS, Chicago Public Schools has significantly expanded access to Universal Preschool for four-year-old children and continues to serve three- and four-year-old children through school-based preschool programs and partnerships with community-based early childhood providers;

WHEREAS, Chicago is home to a linguistically diverse population of young children, and while Chicago Public Schools provides required English Learner services for eligible preschool students, bilingual preschool programming is available at only a limited number of school sites, warranting an assessment of family demand and opportunities to expand access to high-quality bilingual early learning experiences;

WHEREAS, future decisions regarding expansion of preschool programming should be informed by a comprehensive assessment of district and CBO capacity, including classroom availability, facilities, workforce availability, transportation, fiscal sustainability, and the operational capacity necessary to maintain high-quality programming;

WHEREAS, changes to publicly funded preschool enrollment may affect the broader early childhood ecosystem, including the financial sustainability of infant and toddler care, Head Start and Early Head Start providers, family child care providers, licensed child care centers, and other community-based programs that serve Chicago families;

WHEREAS, understanding these potential impacts requires analysis beyond licensed program capacity and should include community-based provider enrollment patterns, staffing, fiscal sustainability, availability of infant and toddler care, family access, and other indicators of system health;

WHEREAS, continued improvement of Chicago's early childhood system also requires an understanding of current preschool utilization, including enrollment patterns, waitlists, geographic access, neighborhood demographic trends, availability and utilization of out-of-school time programming, and other factors affecting equitable family access to high-quality preschool opportunities;

WHEREAS, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Chicago Public Schools has an ongoing obligation to identify, locate, and evaluate children who may have disabilities and who may require special education and related services;

WHEREAS, effective Child Find practices depend upon developmental screening opportunities, timely referrals, comprehensive evaluations, meaningful family engagement, and collaboration among healthcare providers, early childhood programs, and Chicago Public Schools;

WHEREAS, regular reporting and analysis of Child Find data can help the Board of Education monitor access to services, identify disparities or barriers, ensure timely implementation of evaluation processes, and support continuous improvement in serving young children with disabilities;

WHEREAS, federal and state law require eligible preschool-age children with disabilities to receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, with services designed to meet each child's unique needs;

WHEREAS, young children with disabilities benefit from receiving special education services, whenever appropriate, within their natural learning environments alongside their peers, promoting continuity of relationships, reducing unnecessary transitions, and supporting inclusive educational experiences;

WHEREAS, Chicago Public Schools serves preschool-age children with disabilities through a variety of service delivery models, including school-based classrooms and a dual enrollment model through which children attend both a community-based early childhood program and a CPS school in order to receive special education services;

WHEREAS, families, community-based providers, and other stakeholders have identified longstanding challenges associated with the dual enrollment model, including delays in the initiation of services, disruptions to children's daily routines, transportation and scheduling challenges, reduced instructional time, and other barriers that may affect family experience, child well-being, and continuity of services;

WHEREAS, from 2023 through 2025, Chicago Public Schools implemented and evaluated a pilot to provide early childhood special education services within community-based early childhood settings, demonstrating the feasibility of delivering services in children's existing learning environments and identifying promising practices to support inclusion, family engagement, and collaboration between community-based providers and CPS staff;

WHEREAS, the findings of the pilot provide an opportunity to establish a long-term strategy for expanding inclusive service delivery options that increase family access,

reduce barriers to service delivery, and strengthen partnerships between Chicago Public Schools and community-based early childhood providers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

1. The Board of Education directs the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to conduct a comprehensive Early Childhood Landscape and Strategic Planning Study and produce a report evaluating future opportunities to strengthen preschool access and quality for Chicago families.

2. The study and report shall include, at minimum:

a. An assessment of district operational capacity, including facilities, classroom availability, staffing, transportation, projected enrollment, fiscal implications, and other implementation considerations.

b. An analysis of the current preschool landscape, including enrollment patterns, school utilization, waitlists, neighborhood demographic trends, geographic distribution of programs, availability and utilization of out-of-school time programming, access to bilingual preschool programming, and opportunities to better align program offerings with community demand.

c. An assessment of the potential impacts of future preschool expansion on Chicago's mixed-delivery early childhood system, including community-based organizations, Head Start and Early Head Start providers, Preschool for All providers, licensed child care centers, family child care providers, and the availability of infant and toddler care.

d. Recommendations regarding strategies to strengthen preschool access while maintaining a sustainable, equitable, and comprehensive birth-to-five early childhood system for Chicago families.

e. Recommendations for improving equitable access to preschool programming, including strategies to expand access to bilingual preschool programming, strengthen the availability of out-of-school time services, better align program locations with neighborhood demand and demographic trends, and address other barriers affecting family access.

3. In conducting the study, the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, shall consult with families, community-based early childhood providers, home-based early childhood providers, Head Start grant recipients and delegate agencies, family child care

providers, educators, related service providers, labor representatives, advocacy organizations, City and State early childhood agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

4. The Board of Education directs the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to complete a comprehensive implementation planning process for a sustainable community-based early childhood special education service delivery model informed by the findings and recommendations of the 2023–2025 Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Pilot.

5. The implementation planning process shall:

- a. Evaluate the outcomes and recommendations of the 2023–2025 Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Pilot, including impacts on child outcomes, family experience, inclusion, staffing, operational feasibility, and fiscal considerations.
- b. Evaluate the current dual enrollment service delivery model, including the number of children served; average and median timelines from referral to initiation of services; the frequency, duration, and primary causes of delays or service disruptions; transportation and scheduling impacts; staffing and operational considerations; fiscal costs; and other measures of program effectiveness, efficiency, and family experience.
- c. Analyze the comparative strengths, challenges, costs, and operational implications of the community-based service delivery model and the dual enrollment model, and identify opportunities to improve service access, continuity, and educational outcomes for preschool-age children with disabilities.
- d. Identify the policy, operational, workforce, fiscal, contractual, and intergovernmental actions necessary to expand community-based service delivery over time.
- e. Establish a phased implementation strategy and timeline for expanding community-based early childhood special education services while maintaining continuity of services for eligible children and families.
- f. Identify strategies to reduce reliance on service delivery approaches that require preschool children to travel between multiple educational settings during the school day when more integrated service models are feasible and appropriate.
- g. Include meaningful engagement with families, community-based early childhood providers, educators, related service providers, labor representatives,

advocacy organizations, and relevant City and State agencies throughout the planning process.

6. The Chief Executive Officer, or designee, shall present an Early Childhood Child Find Report to the Board of Education on an annual basis.

7. The annual Early Childhood Child Find report shall include, to the extent practicable:

- a. Data regarding developmental screening activities conducted by or in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, including the number of children screened, referral sources, geographic distribution, and demographic information.
- b. Data regarding referrals for initial evaluations for preschool-age children, including referral sources, evaluation outcomes, and the number and percentage of evaluations completed within applicable federal and state timelines.
- c. Information regarding eligibility determinations and the initiation of special education and related services for preschool-age children.
- d. Analysis of trends, disparities, barriers to timely identification and evaluation, and opportunities to strengthen Child Find outreach, family engagement, and coordination with community-based early childhood providers, healthcare providers, and other referral partners.
- e. Recommendations for improving access to developmental screening, referral, evaluation, and early intervention into preschool special education services, where appropriate.

8. The Board of Education shall establish an **Early Childhood Advisory Working Group** to advise on the Early Childhood Landscape and Strategic Planning Study, the Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Implementation Plan, and related initiatives under this Resolution.

- a. The Working Group shall include representatives from the primary CPS departments responsible for early childhood education and special education, including the Office of Early Childhood Education and the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services; up to five Board members, who may rotate their participation; and other relevant stakeholders, including families, community-based early childhood

providers, educators, related service providers, labor representatives, advocacy organizations, and relevant City and State agencies.

- b. The Working Group shall convene an initial meeting to establish its scope, priorities, and meeting schedule, and shall provide ongoing recommendations and feedback throughout the planning and implementation processes.

9. The Board of Education encourages the Chief Executive Officer, or designee, to coordinate the activities required by this Resolution with the Illinois Department of Early Childhood, the City of Chicago and the Every Child Ready Chicago Advisory Council, community-based early childhood providers, families, and other partners to advance a coordinated, equitable, and sustainable birth-to-five early childhood system for Chicago.

10. The Chief Executive Officer shall present to the Board of Education:

- the Early Childhood Landscape and Strategic Planning Study;
- the Community-Based Early Childhood Special Education Implementation Plan; and
- the initial Early Childhood Child Find Report

according to a timeline established by the Chief Executive Officer, with an initial progress update to the Board no later than June 30, 2027, and final recommendations no later than June 30, 2028.