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Utilization Up, Capacity Down: A Look at 3-K and Pre-K Trends in New York City

May 12, 2025 — Seat availability for 3-K and pre-K programs remains a key focus in citywide conversations about early childhood education. While City Hall and the City Council have advanced initiatives to expand access, one question continues to be raised: how are seats distributed across the City's 32 school districts?

The New York City Independent Budget Office (IBO) is publishing a [breakdown](#) of 3-K and pre-K seat capacity, enrollment, and utilization for the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 school years. IBO tracks year-over-year changes by seat type and program type. For a full breakdown by district, please refer to the [appendix](#).

In the 2023-2024 school year, IBO found citywide 3-K enrollment increased and pre-K enrollment decreased. In the same school year, 3-K and pre-K capacity declined. The total number of seats offered to New Yorkers decreased between the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school year. Although the overall utilization rate increased, it is important to note that the total number of seats decreased citywide.

Seat utilization increased within all 3-K program types except for Department of Education (DOE) District Schools, which decreased slightly. Pre-K utilization rates in charter schools, DOE District Schools, and Pre-K Centers all decreased in 2023-2024. However, Pre-K programs offered by community-based organizations increased in utilization rate, driven by a large decrease in seat capacity and a decrease in enrollment.

While [this report breaks down enrollment and capacity trends](#) for 3-K and pre-K programs by individual school district, it does not attempt to explain the shifts in enrollment or how seats are distributed throughout the City. These questions are the focus of ongoing analysis by the New York City Independent Budget Office.





Mayor Adam's recent Executive budget baselined \$136 million in funds previously funded using temporary federal funds or one-time City funds. The administration has stated that these funds will go towards maintaining current 3-K seats, addressing 3-K waitlists, and adding more extended day seats. IBO's analysis extends through the 2023-2024 school year and provides a baseline snapshot that does not include any changes that may result from these recent modifications to the budget.

