

Universal Preschool and Bixby School

February 2023

We are proud of Colorado's decision to subsidize the cost of preschool for all 4-year Coloradoans, starting in the 2023-24 school year. This is an exciting time as the importance of early childhood education is at the forefront of Colorado's education system. Colorado is one of the first states to offer universal preschool, a powerful recognition of the importance of investing in early childhood education. We share this enthusiasm for providing high quality early childhood education for children because we know the decades of research that demonstrate its profound benefits.



After spending many hours participating in meetings and contributing feedback on Colorado's Universal Preschool (UPK) program, Bixby School has determined that it will not participate in UPK in this first year of implementation, 2023-24. There simply are too many elements of the program that have the potential to undermine our ability to deliver high quality programming that aligns with our mission and core beliefs. Here are just a few of the areas that create this concern for us:

- **Bixby students and families are our top priority.**
 - Our team has already invested over 60 hours of time in the rollout of UPK. We anticipate that participation in UPK will continue to demand a significant amount of time from school staff and administrators. Dedicating time to UPK for the foreseeable future detracts from our ability to dedicate time to running the best program we can. As a small school, time is our most precious resource and we must prioritize our current program.
 - Enrollment at a school through UPK is based on a lottery system; we cannot guarantee that currently enrolled families will be placed at Bixby through the lottery process

- **Financial sustainability.** The total cost of the program is unknown, but the resources to support it are limited. There is a risk that the cost to fund the program may exceed the number of families that choose to participate; if that were to happen there is no recourse for programs to recover the funds which we rely upon to pay our faculty salaries
- **New standards.** Colorado is convening a committee to establish program standards for UPK providers; Bixby School believes in the importance of quality standards, and currently complies with standards from the state health department, the state division of childcare, ACIS standards and Colorado Shines standards. However, we cannot commit to a program whose standards are not yet articulated and may conflict with our program philosophy or design.



We are eager to participate in Colorado's UPK program. As the details of UPK are more clearly defined, we look forward to assessing its impact and making adjustments as necessary. In the meantime, we have extended participation in our tuition award program to eligible 4 year olds enrolled in our full-day, 5-day preschool. We recognize this is not a perfect solution but believe it is an appropriate one for the short term.

Resources:

<https://www.rmpbs.org/blogs/news/colorado-universal-prek-challenges-comparison/>
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12vARjZF-NFbSKzH2iUZPA90Pkuz41-t0/view>