






Preschool for
All


in Lowell



Strategic Plan
2025-2027



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the launch of the Lowell Early Childhood Council (LECC) in 1990, Lowell has been steadfast in its mission to develop and expand access to high-quality preschool for all three- and four-year-olds in the city. This strategic plan builds upon the findings and recommendations of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted by Lowell Public Schools (LPS) in collaboration with Pear Associates.

Guided by the voices of families, community champions, and local providers, this plan outlines actionable strategies to achieve three key priorities:

- **PRIORITY I: Expansion of and Access to Preschool**
- **PRIORITY II: Quality Alignment Across School- and Community-based Preschools**
- **PRIORITY III: Equitable Access to Special Education and Inclusion**

Together, these priorities provide a comprehensive framework for addressing systemic challenges and fostering a robust preschool system in Lowell.

PRIORITY 1: Expansion of and Access to Preschool focuses on increasing the availability of affordable and inclusive preschool options to meet the needs of Lowell's diverse families. Families identified significant barriers, such as limited knowledge of available programs, insufficient seats, cost, and transportation challenges. Survey results revealed strong support for full-day programming, with 72% of respondents stating they would access full-day preschool if available. This priority emphasizes removing barriers and ensuring all families can access the preschool program of their choice.

PRIORITY 2: Quality Alignment Across School- and Community-based Preschools ensures that all preschool programs in Lowell deliver evidence-based, high-quality instruction that supports children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. This priority focuses on aligning curricula, professional development, and instructional practices across all early learning settings to meet local goals for success. Efforts include evaluating current curricula, integrating inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices, and supporting a seamless transition to kindergarten.

PRIORITY 3: Equitable Access to Special Education and Inclusion underscores the importance of providing every child with the support they need to thrive. This priority aims to strengthen special education services, improve transitions between early intervention and preschool, and reduce barriers for families of children with special needs and dual-language learners. Initiatives include collecting and utilizing data to inform equity efforts and training practitioners about community and school-based resources.

For each of these priorities, the plan identifies goals, strategies, actions and timelines defined as follows:

- **GOAL:** A broad, long-term outcome that Lowell aims to achieve.
- **STRATEGY:** A high-level approach or method used to accomplish each goal.
- **ACTION:** A specific, measurable step Lowell will take to implement a strategy and achieve the goal.
- **TIMELINE:** A scheduled timeframe that outlines when Lowell will complete the actions and strategies.

Achieving the goals, strategies, and actions outlined in this strategic plan requires a collaborative effort across the entire Lowell School District, community partners, preschool providers, and other key stakeholders. Success depends on shared commitment, resources, and coordination to address barriers, align quality standards, and create equitable access for all families. By working together, Lowell can build a comprehensive and inclusive early education system that meets the needs of its diverse community and supports every child's success.

II. PRIORITY 1: EXPANSION OF AND ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL

Expanding access to high-quality preschool in Lowell is essential to supporting the city’s diverse families and fostering equitable opportunities for early learning. This priority emphasizes implementing program models that address and overcome barriers specific to Lowell families, enabling them to access their preferred early education options and prioritizing the program structures most valued by the community. Efforts will focus on reducing or eliminating barriers to access, particularly for families of diverse learners and those navigating complex decisions about early education and care.

FOLLOWING ARE THE GOALS, STRATEGY, ACTIONS AND TIMELINES FOR PRIORITY 1: EXPANSION OF AND ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL:

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
Conduct a facilities assessment to expand physical spaces suitable for preschool classrooms.	Conduct an assessment among existing preschool facilities to determine if there is space to accommodate additional preschool children without compromising the quality of education or safety standards.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a facilities assessment tool that assesses existing and potential spaces and their accessibility 2. Disseminate facilities assessment to all school and community-based preschools 3. Compile findings of facilities assessment 4. Identify additional accessible spaces among current preschool providers 	Ongoing through years 1-3 in alignment with budgets due April/May
	Assess other spaces in Lowell to determine available facilities that may be conducive to preschool classrooms, early childhood team meetings, playgroups, and parenting classes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with the town manager to review existing city-owned properties 2. Enlist support from real estate agents to identify potential private facilities 3. Assess public and private facilities to determine if they may be conducive to preschool settings 4. Create a summary of potential spaces, including steps needed to ensure they comply with local, state, and federal regulations for preschool education 	<i>Ongoing</i> through years 1-3 in alignment with budgets due April/May
	Explore alternatives to “brick-and-mortar” facilities for potential preschool classrooms	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify flexible and innovative facilities (i.e., mobile preschools, modular classrooms) 2. Create steps needed to ensure alternative spaces comply with regulations 3. Create a summary of potential options 	<i>Ongoing</i> through years 1-3 in alignment with budgets due April/May

II. PRIORITY 1: EXPANSION OF AND ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
Explore safe and affordable transportation options	Explore policy changes and funding options to enable public school bussing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing policies related to school bussing 2. Review existing financial resources supporting bussing 3. Determine changes and funding needed to support preschool bussing 4. Develop recommendations related to policy changes and blended/braided funding 	Years 2-3
	Inform families about ride-sharing and public transportation options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and gather information on eligibility, geography, and cost from private entities and community providers that offer transportation services 2. Conduct research on ride-sharing and public transportation options, including Uber, Lyft, Taxis, Lowell Regional Transit Authority, and Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority 3. Determine costs for usage and benefits available to working families to utilize ride-sharing and public transportation programs 4. Disseminate information to families about ride-sharing options and public transportation 	
	Explore creative carpooling models that would encourage a sense of community while allowing families to share the transportation burden	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a task force of families 2. Conduct research using models from other communities 3. Develop a Lowell-specific preschool carpool model 4. Disseminate information to enlist family participation 	
	Develop a concrete list of transportation needs for families, including documenting the number of students who are required to unenroll because of lack of transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop transportation support review “committee” 2. Develop a priority population list utilizing the PEG transportation document previously developed 	

II. PRIORITY 1: EXPANSION OF AND ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
Develop a multilingual informational campaign in the four most common languages (English, Haitian-Creole, Khmer, Portuguese, and Spanish) and information resource hubs for families	Educate families about the value of early education and promote available school and community programs to assure that all family members, regardless of their primary language, can engage with and support their child’s early education effectively	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a family leadership/focus group to inform communication and support dissemination 2. Create and disseminate brochures and flyers with clear and visually appealing information, including the use of infographics to simplify the registration process 3. Plan, promote and conduct family workshops and information nights that allow family members to ask questions 4. Conduct traditional and social media outreach that includes posts and videos explaining the importance of preschool and how to enroll 5. Collaborate with community organizations to share information through their email lists, meetings, and newsletters 	<i>Launch in Year 1, ongoing through Years 2-3</i>
	Establish consistent Preschool Information Hubs at key community locations as a one-stop resource to triage needs and identify the best options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a Preschool Information Hub model, including materials, messages, and format 2. Develop partnerships with potential HUB locations, including City Hall, Library, Social Services providers, Post Office, DMV, Health care providers, housing providers, family resource centers 3. Develop marketing materials 4. Update the Lowell Early Childhood Hub landing page 	<i>Launch in end of Year 1, ongoing through Years 2-3</i>

II. PRIORITY 1: EXPANSION OF AND ACCESS TO PRESCHOOL

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
<p>Engage policymakers and philanthropic organizations to increase long-term, sustainable funding</p>	<p>Establish/strengthen relationships with policymakers who can allocate public funds and create financial support structures.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review local and state laws and policies that support preschool programming 2. Schedule meetings with elected officials to encourage policy change and allocation of resources toward preschool expansion 3. Schedule meetings with communities that utilize Title 1 and other funds to support sustainable preschool funding 4. Schedule meetings with communities that have established and have active preschool and/or early childhood cabinets 	<p><i>Ongoing throughout Years 1-3</i></p>
	<p>Conduct outreach to local and regional philanthropic organizations to solicit grant support and encourage the creation of endowments and other financial mechanisms that provide ongoing support for preschool programs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct research to identify funding resources 2. Develop a proposed funding model that includes funding sources needed, gaps, and needs to inform applications and requests to funders 3. Apply for grants and other funding mechanisms in support of preschool expansion 4. Advocate for the establishment of an endowment for long-term sustainability 	<p><i>Ongoing throughout Years 1-3</i></p>

III: PRIORITY 2: QUALITY ALIGNMENT ACROSS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOLS

To ensure children in Lowell are on track to succeed by third grade, this priority focuses on developing a cohesive plan for aligned learning goals and programming that meets the developmental needs of children. Local supports for quality alignment will be leveraged to enhance instructional practices, embed professional development opportunities, and provide instructional leadership support across all early childhood settings. These efforts will emphasize cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic responsiveness to better serve Lowell’s diverse families. Together, these strategies will align the community around shared goals, elevate quality standards, and support the success of every child in Lowell.

FOLLOWING ARE THE GOALS, STRATEGY, ACTIONS AND TIMELINES FOR PRIORITY 2: QUALITY ALIGNMENT ACROSS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOLS

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
LPS and its community partners will recruit and retain highly qualified educators	Utilize proven educator recruitment strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and strengthen partnerships with colleges and universities 2. Conduct networking among early childhood programs and professionals 3. Develop generic ECE role-specific career ladder and degree attainment roadmaps to be shared across the community 4. Encourage in-house career development channels 5. Focus on hiring special education teachers to staff inclusive preschool classrooms 6. Establish common criteria for reviewing quality candidates 	Ongoing throughout years 1-3
	Offer competitive compensation and benefits, professional development opportunities, access to evidence-based educational ongoing coaching.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research industry standards for compensation and benefits within Lowell/Massachusetts 2. Implement a coaching and mentoring system where educators receive ongoing feedback and support 	
	Continue to offer a positive and supportive workplace culture that values collaboration, creativity, and mutual respect among staff members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish regular meetings and feedback loops for sharing ideas and feedback 2. Organize team-building events to foster collaboration 3. Develop initiatives that celebrate backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives 	

III: PRIORITY 2: QUALITY ALIGNMENT ACROSS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOLS

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
<p>Provide consistent preschool curricula across settings that engage family members in their child’s education.</p>	<p>Update preschool curriculum modules using information obtained from reviews and work developed to fill in identified gaps, including supporting and engaging learners with different access points, such as those with disabilities and multi-language learners.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit educators and colleagues to participate in a working group 2. Facilitated work group meetings that include reviewing documents, identifying gaps, exploring alignments across programs, and using data to inform actions 3. Collaborate with workgroup and potential partners to update curriculum modules 4. Develop home-school links for curriculum modules 5. Conduct professional development on updated curriculum, including tiered implementation 	<p>Ongoing throughout years 1-3</p>
<p>Ensure families have access to wraparound supports</p>	<p>Serve as a resource to help connect families with resources that help to address the social, emotional, and financial needs that may impact learning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compile information about financial assistance programs, nutritional supports, housing supports, and early childhood subsidies, among other resources. 2. Collaborate with local health providers to facilitate access to regular health check-ups, v accinations, and medical screenings for children. 3. Partner with local providers to conduct workshops on child nutrition, developmental milestones, and health-related topics so that parents and caregivers can support their child’s development at home 4. Promote parenting classes or support groups focused on stress management, positive parenting 5. Explore the implementation of child wellness centers that will help families provide families with emotional and social support through activities such as art and reading 6. Work with mental health professionals to provide referrals for counseling services or behavioral support for children and families, promote emotional well-being, and address social-emotional challenges. 	

III: PRIORITY II: QUALITY ALIGNMENT ACROSS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOLS

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
	<p>Develop and foster relationships with family child care centers to ensure family choice and additional options to fill family needs</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify family child care centers 2. Develop a relationship-building strategy that includes messaging of benefits 3. Conduct outreach and schedule an initial introductory meeting(s) 4. Develop a shared collaboration plan 5. Establish and evaluate feedback channels 	

IV: PRIORITY 3: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION IN LOWELL

Creating equitable access to special education and inclusion for young learners in Lowell requires a robust program design that supports children’s diverse needs while fostering seamless transitions and reducing barriers for families. A streamlined local system for screening, referrals, and transitions will be implemented to enhance the coordination of services. Such efforts include improving processes for entry into early intervention programs and transitions into preschool special education while reducing the number of daily transitions for children requiring longer care hours. By prioritizing inclusive practices, enhancing the accessibility of special education services, and supporting families throughout the process, Lowell will create a system that supports the developmental, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of all children, fostering an equitable foundation for lifelong learning.

FOLLOWING ARE THE GOALS, STRATEGY, ACTIONS AND TIMELINES FOR PRIORITY 3: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION IN LOWELL

GOAL	STRATEGY	ACTIONS	TARGET DATE
Establish data systems to inform program planning and evaluation.	Expand screening among all incoming preschool and kindergarten students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect summative data on participation in preschool 2. Collect Early Literacy Indicator data 3. Engage assessment professionals to assist with screening 	<i>Ongoing throughout Years 1-3</i>
	Create a data system for tracking students and families	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Track referrals to and from LPS and community-based early childhood programs 2. Track referrals for comprehensive services (i.e., mental health, WIC, food pantry), participation in transition activities (EI, PK-K), and attendance at informational meetings, parent education, and playgroups 3. Utilize data to assist in balancing kindergarten class lists 	
Educate early childhood, Early Intervention, and pediatricians about the LPS referral process	Train professionals about the referral process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop training materials 2. Schedule training for early childhood providers, early intervention professionals, and pediatricians on all referral processes, including LPS, CTI, Behavioral Health, Special Education, Early Intervention, Child Find, and the associated forms for each referral process 3. Conduct training 4. Evaluate training 	<i>Ongoing throughout Years 1-3</i>

This strategic planning process was made possible with grant funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Thank you to all of those who contributed to the creation of the strategic plan:

Theresa Tha	Youth Coordinator	Cambodian Mutual Assistance Assoc.
Anjali Bhagat	SOR-PEC Grant Coordinator	City of Lowell
Thomas Golden	City Manager	City of Lowell
Cheryl Finney	Child Development Officer	Clarendon
Thais Ligo	Lowell Director	Clarendon
LeaAnn Huber	Operations Director	Community Teamwork
Meghan Siembor	Division Director	Community Teamwork
Shawna Doran	Deputy Division Director	Community Teamwork
Denise Muro	Interpreting/Translation Manager	Found in Translation
James Linnehan, Jr.	President and CEO	Gr. Lowell Community Foundation
Kerrie D’Entremont	Executive Director	Greater Lowell Health Alliance
Deborah Dobens	Director	Greater Lowell YMCA
Vanna Howard	State Representative	Joint Committee on Education
Lina Gruca	Director	Lowell Day Nursery
Mitzy Mauricio	Opioid Response Early Childhood Coordinator	Lowell Public Health
Anna Hueston	Early Childhood Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Carolyn Rocheleau	Title I Director	Lowell Public Schools
Darcie Coleman	Social Worker Family Resource Center	Lowell Public Schools
Fatima Desousa	Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices Coordinator	Lowell Public Schools
Jennifer Stack	Preschool Teacher	Lowell Public Schools
Kathleen Huntley	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Kerry Wilcox	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Kevin Andriolo	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Latifah Phillips	Chief Equity and Engagement Officer	Lowell Public Schools
Lauren Wehry	Early Childhood Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Liam Skinner	Superintendent	Lowell Public Schools
Lisa Van Thiel	Early Childhood Coordinator	Lowell Public Schools
Matthew McLean	Principal	Lowell Public Schools
Melissa Newall	English Language Arts Coordinator, K-4	Lowell Public Schools
Nicole Bergeron	CPPI Coach Consultant	Lowell Public Schools
Roberta Keefe	Principal	Lowell Public Schools

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Susan LaCroix	Assistant Early Childhood Director	Lowell Public Schools
Tara Cole	Early Childhood Education Coach	Lowell Public Schools
Veronique Roberts	Data Analyst, Integration Technology Specialist	Lowell Public Schools
Zoe Dzineku	Director, Family Leadership Institute	Lowell Public Schools
Fred Bahou	Member	Lowell School Committee
Peter Lonsway	Deputy Superintendent	National Park Service
Maria Cunha	Board Member	Parker Foundation
Alison Gray	President	Pear Associates
Brittany Little	Consultant	Pear Associates
Lara Quiroga	Consultant (former)	Pear Associates
Karen John Hope	Director	Small Steps
Theo Groh		Wheelhouse Web Solutions