



Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Enrollment and Lottery Process

This document outlines the Watertown City School District's Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) enrollment and lottery procedures in alignment with New York State Education Department (NYSED) UPK guidance. The goal of the UPK program is to provide equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences for all eligible children.

How the Program Meets Specific Student Needs

The UPK program is designed to support the developmental needs of young learners through developmentally appropriate instruction that addresses social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development.

The district strives to ensure equitable access for all students, including:

- Children with disabilities
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Students who may benefit from additional supports

UPK services are provided in inclusive settings and, when applicable, in collaboration with the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) to ensure appropriate support and services are implemented in accordance with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

How to Rank Program Choices

Families may indicate their site preferences on the UPK application by ranking their choices in order of preference.

- Ranking sites does not guarantee placement at a specific location.
- Students will be placed at the highest-ranked site with available space at the time their application is drawn during the lottery.
- Families are encouraged to rank all sites they are willing to attend, as this increases the likelihood of placement.

Enrollment Period and Application Deadline

The UPK enrollment period will be announced annually by the Watertown City School District. All completed applications must be submitted by the established deadline to be included in the district-wide lottery.

Applications received after the deadline will be considered only if **seats** remain available following the completion of the lottery and waitlist placement.

Instructions on Where and How to Register

Families may obtain and submit UPK applications through the following methods:

- Online: Via the district website - www.watertowncsd.org
- In Person: 532 S. Massey Street - a secure drop box is located at the front door if staff are unavailable at the time of drop-off
- By Mail: 532 S. Massey Street, Watertown, NY 13601

Age Eligibility

3-Year-Old UPK: Children must turn three years old on or before December 1 of the enrollment year.

4-Year-Old UPK: Children must turn four years old on or before December 1 of the enrollment year.

Required Documentation After Accepted into WCSD UPK

All required documentation will be collected during the second part of enrollment, in collaboration with the assigned CBO or district placement site. Documentation includes:

- Proof of child's age (birth certificate, passport, or other acceptable documentation)
- Proof of residency within the district
- NYS Required Health Examination Form
- Immunization Record
- Custody or guardianship paperwork (if applicable)
- Completed UPK application form

Lottery Procedure

If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of available UPK seats, a random and equitable lottery will be conducted. Separate lotteries will be held for 3-year-old and 4-year-old applicants.

- Each eligible application will be assigned a sequential identification number.
- Numbers will be drawn at random.
- Students will be placed at their highest-ranked site with available space at the time their number **is** drawn.
- ***For students attending the 4-year-old program***, if the lottery placement is outside of the student's attendance zone, the parent/guardian will be given the option to select a placement within the attendance zone if they wish to have their child transported by the School District. Transportation will only be provided by the School District if the student attends the UPK program designated by the School District within the student's attendance zone. Where parents/guardians select a program outside of the student's attendance zone (as determined by the School District), parents/guardians are responsible for transporting students to and from such programs.
- Once all available seats are filled, remaining applicants will be placed on waitlists.

Waitlist Placement and Procedure

Students who cannot be placed at any selected site due to capacity limits will be placed on a site-specific waitlist.

- Waitlists will be maintained separately for each UPK site.
- Placement on the waitlist will follow the exact order in which application numbers are drawn during the lottery.
- **If** a seat becomes available, families will be contacted in waitlist order.

Notification of Placement

Families will be notified of their child's UPK placement or waitlist status following the completion of the lottery or if a lottery is not required after the submission window closes.

- Notification will be provided via mail.

- Additional notifications will occur **if** a student is offered placement from a waitlist.

Transportation

The School District does not provide transportation for students participating in the **3-year-old UPK program**. Parents are responsible for transporting students to and from program locations assigned, following the designated drop-off and pick-up times provided by the Community Based Organizations (CBO).

Students residing in the School District and participating in the School District's **4-year-old UPK program** may, in the School District's discretion, receive transportation to and from their designated UPK program pursuant to Board Policy #5501. Transportation will only be provided by the School District if the student attends the UPK program designated by the School District within the student's attendance zone. Where parents/guardians select a program outside of the student's attendance zone (as determined by the School District), parents/guardians are responsible for transporting students to and from such programs.

Transportation will be provided for students to special education program placements to the extent required by Education Law § 4401 and Board Policies.

Duration

- Monday - Friday, follows the District Calendar
- 5 hours for **full** day, offered at no cost

Questions and Assistance

For questions regarding UPK enrollment, eligibility, or the lottery process, families are encouraged to contact the Pre-K Department (315-786-5071) for assistance.