

The Potential Problems with Universal Pre-K

It always seems like there is some new panacea being promised for the nation's educational woes. At one time, that panacea was No Child Left Behind, then Race to the Top... and in the last several years, universal preschool.

Endorsed by high-profile politicians such as [Hillary Clinton](#) and [President Obama](#), more and more states are wrestling with whether or not to implement such a program. This school year marks the start of New York City's universal Pre-K program.

According to [The Atlantic](#), NYC's program will send "65,000 4-year-olds" to preschool for a price tag of \$300 million a year. But some are concerned that such an "approach is wasteful because it includes the children of wealthier families who may reap minimal incremental benefits from government-sponsored early education."

The Atlantic goes on to report:

"[Studies have shown](#) that while low-income children benefit exponentially with pre-school, children raised in high-income families do well regardless because they are naturally exposed to richer educational experiences."

I wonder, however, if universal Pre-K will be detrimental to both rich and poor alike. If middle and high-income parents can rely on universal Pre-K, will they spend less time reading to and talking with their children, thinking that the preschool is doing the job for them? And if all children are in universal Pre-K, will teachers be less able to devote themselves to the low-income children who need more attention and training? In addition, will many of the social and parenting issues that contribute to the perceived need for

low-income Pre-K remain unaddressed?

[Image Credit](#)