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**DEPUTY MAYORS GIBBS, WALCOTT, SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR KLEIN AND  
ACS COMMISSIONER MATTINGLY URGE PARENTS OF FOUR-YEAR-OLDS TO SIGN  
UP FOR FREE UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN SEATS IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHES**

*New Tools Through 311 and NYC.Gov Make it Easier Than Ever Before to Find a Program*

*6,000 Seats Available; Vacancies Must Be Filled by October 31, 2008 Deadline*

Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community Development Dennis M. Walcott, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein and Administration for Children's Services Commissioner John B. Mattingly today announced new tools making it easier for parents to take advantage of free universal pre-kindergarten seats that are still available throughout the City. Currently, 6,000 half-day and full-day seats for children who turn four years of age by December 31, 2008 remain unfilled at public schools, child care centers contracted by the Administration for Children's Services and community-based organizations contracted by the Department of Education. For the first time ever, to find programs with vacancies parents can call 311 and ask for "UPK programs in my neighborhood," or log onto the City's website, [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov), to search City Map for locations and link to the Department of Education website, where a list of programs can be downloaded. The Deputy Mayors, Chancellor Klein and Commissioner Mattingly were joined at the Hudson Guild UPK program in Manhattan by Interim Executive Director Miguel Pedraza-Cumba.

"The City's universal pre-kindergarten program gives children the tools they need to excel in the future and offers families this crucial service at no cost," said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs. "There are still seats available, so we urge parents to take advantage of them before the October 31st deadline -- it's not too late."

"The research is clear. Children who attend high quality early childhood programs demonstrate the social, emotional and cognitive skills that are necessary for success in school," said Deputy Mayor Dennis M. Walcott. "Good pre-kindergarten classrooms help children gain mastery over pre-reading, reading and math, which are the building blocks of early learning."

"As the City tries to increase its capacity to provide free universal pre-kindergarten to all four-year olds, we urge parents to take advantage of the seats currently available," said Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein. "A quality early childhood education is the foundation for success in school. Parents shouldn't miss this chance to give their children a strong start in life."

(more)

“Children’s Services and the Department of Education are working together to ensure that parents have access to quality child care throughout the City,” said Administration for Children’s Services Commissioner John B. Mattingly. “There are still UPK slots available in our contracted centers and Children’s Services knows that children who receive quality child care in our settings experience long-term term benefits.”

“It has been a priority of mine since I became Speaker to ensure that all four-year olds in New York City that want to attend a UPK program have that option,” said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. “I am thrilled to announce today the beginning of a month-long collaborative outreach effort aimed at providing families in need of a UPK program with the information on how to find available seats for their children in their neighborhood. Early childhood education is integral to the future development of our City’s young people, and is one of the most critical factors in determining future success.”

“It is critical that we work to inform parents that there are still UPK seats available for children that need them,” said Education Committee Chair, Robert Jackson. “Pre-K education is the first step in helping children to succeed in school and beyond, and provides a crucial foundation for our City’s children. I am thrilled that the Council and the administration are working together to provide parents with information about empty UPK seats and how they can go about accessing them for their children.”

“Hudson Guild encourages all parents to enroll their children in UPK programs,” said Hudson Guild Interim Executive Director Miguel Pedraza-Cumba. “These programs, in conjunction with Head Start and Child Care, provide children with a strong foundation to start their education and succeed in the future.”

Universal pre-kindergarten is defined as 2.5 hours of enriched educational services, at no cost to parents. Since 2002, the number of four-year-olds enrolled in UPK has increased by more than 14,000 with more than 58,000 available slots this year. The Bloomberg administration and the City Council have worked collaboratively to increase access to pre-kindergarten programs and to ensure their quality over the past six years. The City Council also launched an outreach campaign today to educate parents about the availability of UPK seats and members will distribute flyers to their constituents that will help link families to programs with vacancies.

While the majority of funding for UPK comes from state funds, the Department of Education has also invested significant resources in moving more students from half-day to full-day seats, making it easier for working parents to enroll their children. Today’s announcement is a collaboration aimed at making sure that families who want and need UPK have access to seats, and to ensure that state monies are utilized.

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