



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham Visits Brewster Central School District's Universal Pre-K Program

PETE HARCKHAM September 19, 2024

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New York State Sen. Pete Harckham with (l-r) BCSD Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources Stephen Hancock, John F. Kennedy Elementary School Principal John Conroy, Assistant Principal Eileen Cruz, K-5 ELA Specialist Eileen Barret, Superintendent Mich

State Senator secured \$1.58 million for UPK in the school district over the past three years  
*Brewster, NY* - New York State Sen. Pete Harckham visited the Brewster Central School District's (BCSD) tuition-free Universal Pre-K (UPK) program Monday morning to meet with

the school district's administration and stopped by three different classrooms with students actively engaged in their learning.

The BCSD's UPK program, introduced last year, is funded with some federal dollars and through the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) allocation in the annual State Budget.

"New York's Universal Pre-Kindergarten program has been a tremendous success in our communities," said Harckham. "Congratulations to the Brewster Central School District on the robust program it has built to engage their young scholars. I'm proud that we passed this legislation to ensure over 2,800 students in Senate District 40 have access to early education and the opportunities it provides."

Before it was passed four years ago by the Democratic Majority in the State Senate, UPK programs did not exist outside of New York City. This meant many families could not provide their children with pre-kindergarten education due to financial constraints. Since the program went into effect, New York State has invested over \$355 million into UPK to provide over 51,000 young students outside of New York City with tuition-free education as of the end of the 2023 school year.

BCSD currently offers five UPK sections: one at John F. Kennedy Elementary School, two at Brewster High School and two at the St. James the Apostle School in Carmel Hamlet—servicing a total of over 100 students.

Since the program started in Brewster, Harckham has secured \$1.58 million to support the BCSD's UPK over the past two years and \$35 million in total state funding for Pre-K programs throughout the 40th Senate District since taking office in 2019.

“As the recipients of a \$900,000 UPK expansion grant from NYSED, we were thrilled to host Senator Harckham for a tour of our on-campus sections,” said BCSD Superintendent Michelle Gosh. “This expansion grant funding allows us to provide an essential early learning experience for our youngest students with minimal reliance on the general budget.”

During his tour, Harckham visited the three Pre-K classrooms at BCSD campuses and saw students participating in arts projects and an interactive lesson on showing kindness. He also toured the courtyard playground and cafeteria at John F. Kennedy Elementary School to get a full understanding of what a standard five-hour school day looks like for the students.

“Thank you, Senator Harckham, for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet our youngest learners yesterday. In just one year we are seeing students who are reading well, treating others with respect and helping one another learn,” said John F. Kennedy Elementary School Principal John Conroy. “The current kindergarten students who attended our Pre-K program last year have adjusted extremely well this school year as a direct result. We are extremely grateful for the assistance in securing funds for the BCSD budget to create such an outstanding program and will continue to monitor and assess our Pre-K program as it grows from year to year.”