

# Orleans pre-K program proposed

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ORLEANS -- While nationally a \$3.5 trillion spending package would provide for universal pre-kindergarten instruction, Orleans voters will have a chance to beat Washington to the punch.

The Orleans Elementary School Committee has backed a warrant article for \$495,000 to provide pre-K education to all Orleans families. Approving the funds will require a Proposition 2 1/2 override as it would be a permanent addition to the town's tax levy. The select board voted to place the article on the Oct. 25 town meeting warrant.

The pre-school program would be for 3- and 4-year-olds. Services would be offered by licensed private providers and the town would pay the provider, chosen by the parents, directly, up to \$10,000 for a 4-year-old and \$5,000 for a 3-year-old. The cost difference is because the 4-year-old program would be seven hours vs. four hours for 3-year-olds.

Gail Briere of the school committee noted Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet and Eastham all subsidize pre school education.

There is an existing pre school program in town for youngsters with special needs, and other children are allowed in on a lottery basis, but it is limited to 15 children. That program costs \$141,977.

"We're looking at equity and access for all. This will make an immediate difference to the community," Briere said. "We're looking for you (the select board) to support the article on the warrant and to let the voters decide."

Board member Andrea Reed noted the committee should prepare an FAQ sheet to help educate voters about the benefits of a pre-k program. Briere said they would do so.

Town Administrator John Kelly said that while the \$495,000 would be a permanent addition to the levy, as opposed to a debt exclusion, it could be repealed or reduced should other funding, such as federal or gifts, become available.