



Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Children Prepared for School – Children will have access to high quality early care and education settings that will prepare them for school.

High quality pre-k gives *all* children a fair start for educational success. Brain research shows dramatic growth from birth to age five and that children learn more during this time than any other. Children in high quality pre-k programs make gains in early literacy, pre-reading, and early math; have more positive interactions with peers and adults; and are better prepared for kindergarten.

In response to this compelling research, Invest in Children launched the first phase of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) in August 2007. The launch of this initial phase marks the beginning of a multi-year rollout of a program that will serve 12,000 children, ages three to five, by 2019. Ultimately the goal of the program is to continue to expand until about 70-75 percent of eligible 3- to 5-year-olds are enrolled.

UPK in Cuyahoga County makes high quality early care and education more affordable for families. Although states and communities across the country are implementing similar programs, UPK in Cuyahoga County is the first such program in the state of Ohio.

All UPK sites meet a series of standards, proven through vast research to be the hallmarks of quality that result in improved school readiness. These standards include increased teacher qualifications and commensurate compensation, lower staff to child ratios, use of approved curricula, engagement of families, and family linkages to necessary supportive services.

All teachers and staff have attained or are working towards an appropriate college degree. All programs utilize research-based curricula and all center-based programs maintain a one-to-ten staff to child ratio. Ongoing professional development is provided to all sites in collaboration with Starting Point for Early Care and Education in order to pursue advanced qualifications. Each program also receives additional training and support to serve children with special needs.

In addition to providing resources to enhance the quality of programs, supplemental scholarships are provided to families at or below 400% of the federal poverty level to reduce their parent fee by about one-third. These scholarships make UPK more affordable.

UPK is delivered through a variety of early care and education settings, including public and private pre-kindergarten, Head Start, Early Learning Initiative programs, child care centers, and family child care homes. UPK sites are distributed throughout the county, with ten sites in the City of Cleveland, ten sites in the eastern suburbs, and four sites in the western suburbs.

For more information:
Office of Early Childhood
310 W. Lakeside Ave., Suite 565
Cleveland, Ohio 44113
216-698-2215

www.investinchildren.cuyahogacounty.us



Invest in Children brings parents, families, and the entire community together to make sure children enter kindergarten **healthy, happy and ready to learn**. We are making a **big** difference by building a stronger future for our community.

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