

TOLEDO CHILDREN DESERVE

(HIGH-QUALITY)

PRE-K

Transforming Our Kids and Our Community



ABC



Why Pre-K is Important for Toledo's Children

According to the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, only 18% of Toledo children enter TPS ready to learn. Too many of Toledo's approximately 4,000 4-year-olds are not enrolled in Pre-K programs that result in successful kindergarten readiness. Factors such as highly trained, compensated and supported teachers, evidence-based curriculum, six hours of enriched learning time per day, routine developmental assessments and low teacher-child ratios, all play an important role in a child's early learning and development. They help ensure children will grow, thrive and be ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

For the child, the first few years are when their brains are developing at a rapid pace. In fact, studies show that from birth to age five, a child's brain develops more rapidly than any other time in life. During this time, a child's cognitive and social development is forming—they learn how to share, how to wait their turn, how to form relationships. They learn how to manage their impulses, emotions and behavior. And they should be introduced to language, reading and math.

There are challenges to offering the kind of high-quality Pre-K our kids deserve. The kind our educators know they need to provide to prepare our children for kindergarten. The kind defined as a 3-star or better rating in the Ohio Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) system.

We know that many of our Pre-K providers are trying to offer the high-quality programming our children deserve, but they simply don't have the budget or other resources needed to increase their SUTQ rating. And, with nearly 40% of our 4-year-olds living under the federal poverty level, many families cannot afford the going rate of tuition-based preschool—even with government funding that helps defray these costs.

When we don't provide high-quality learning experiences prior to age five, we've lost perhaps the greatest opportunity to lay the foundation for a child's success in kindergarten and beyond. A foundation that ultimately sets them up for a successful career and life.

"Providing a high-quality early childhood education for our youngest citizens is essential for their educational success. Research has consistently shown that these early years hold the greatest potential for optimal cognitive and social development, resulting in long-term positive outcomes. When we invest in our community's children through education, we are investing in a strong future for our next generation."

Elisa A. Huss-Hage

Professor, Teacher Education and Human Services
Owens Community College

"Most of us as parents remember our children began asking question after question around age 3-4. They talked and wanted to know about everything. Imagine a setting for all 4-year-olds in our community learning and developing with high educational standards that will prepare them for a life-long learning journey—that's universal Pre-K!"

Lisa McDuffie

President/CEO, YWCA Northwest Ohio

What Early Childhood Learning Means for the Community

DOLLARS INVESTED IN PRE-K PAY DIVIDENDS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

According to the Washington Center for Economic Growth, "Pre-K programs are among the most effective public investments. For every \$1 invested in early childhood education, there is up to \$8.90 returned to the community." Over half of the nation's largest cities, and every other major city in Ohio, now have publicly funded Pre-K programs.

The United States Department of Education, in *A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America* (April, 2015), noted that "studies show that children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to need special education services and be held back a grade

level. They are also more likely to graduate from high school, attend college and have successful careers." In addition, there is a direct correlation between poverty, crime and lack of educational attainment.

Unfortunately, there are currently 13,992 children (from birth to age 5) in Lucas County who are living below the poverty line. High-quality early childhood education helps break generational poverty and transforms communities. Kids who attend high-quality early childhood education programs throughout their youngest years, and in particular attend Pre-K, are more likely to succeed throughout their educational career.

"No matter a person's age, relationships matter. A high-quality Pre-K experience is important for children so they experience life with others. Skills such as communicating, problem solving, listening, disagreeing, persevering, valuing self and others, thinking, deciding and caring will be capabilities that will be with them forever."

Karen L. McCoy, PhD

President, Toledo Day Nursery

"Investing in the education and success of young children is critical to the well-being of every community. Well educated children become well educated adults. Simply put, education leads to a higher quality of life. A life that generates social and economic prosperity...not only for the individual, but for the community as a whole."

Dr. Raymond Witte

Dean, Judith Herb College of Education
University of Toledo

It is time for Toledo to join the other major cities in Ohio and throughout the nation that have provided high-quality Pre-K to all of their children. We owe it to Toledo's children. Pre-K will pay big dividends not only for them, but for the future of our community.

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Learn more at prektoledo.com.