



U-46 Board of Education: Early Learner Initiatives Update

Increasing opportunities and improving instructional quality.

Katie Cox, Director of Early Learner Initiatives

June 10, 2024



Early Learners Mission Statement

Our mission is to create inclusive learning communities for children **birth through Kindergarten** and their families.

We elevate student and family engagement through hands on learning, open-ended play, family support, and community outreach. This nurturing partnership enhances cultural identity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic growth, in order to bring relevant contributions to the world.



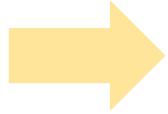
Listeners will...



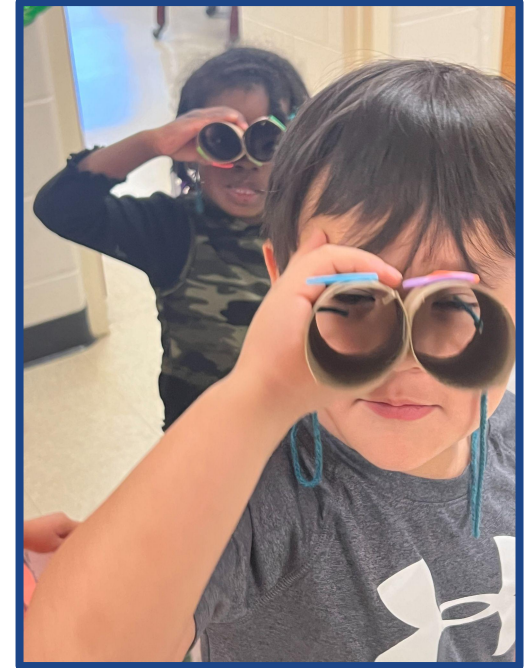
Gain a better understanding of our work with our youngest citizens and their families in our birth to three program and community wide efforts.



Learn about our district three to five preschool programs and our progress at increasing quality and expanding opportunities across the district.

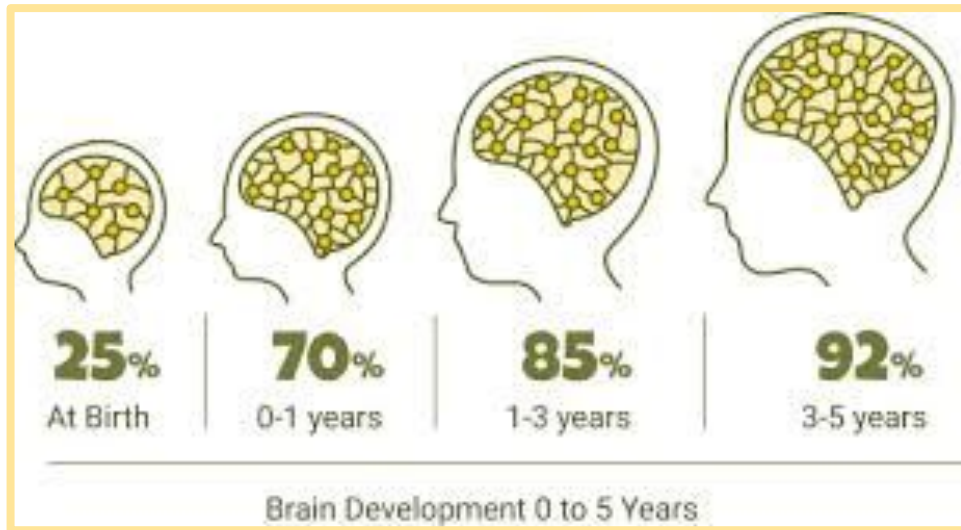


Review our work in kindergarten this year and our plan to expand developmentally appropriate learning through 2nd grade in the years ahead.



Our Future Begins with our Children

Birth to three years old, when learning begins!



Within School District U-46 boundaries, we have **8,744** children under the age of three.

-2022 Census Data



Current Birth to Three Efforts



Served this year: **170 children, 147 families**

Number of children that transitioned to preschool this year: **42**

Number of families on the waitlist: **unable to take new families** since January, referred families to the Kane Co Health Dept

Number of slots for home visiting to families in U-46: **307**;
150 slots served by our district PAT program

**Program expansion
planned for 2026!**



Partner in family and community engagement

Play groups, language in the laundromat, learning on the go, collaboration with community partners that serve our families

12, 235 families participated/served last year

**Planning for a community
wide messaging campaign to
support
families with
developmental parenting skills.**



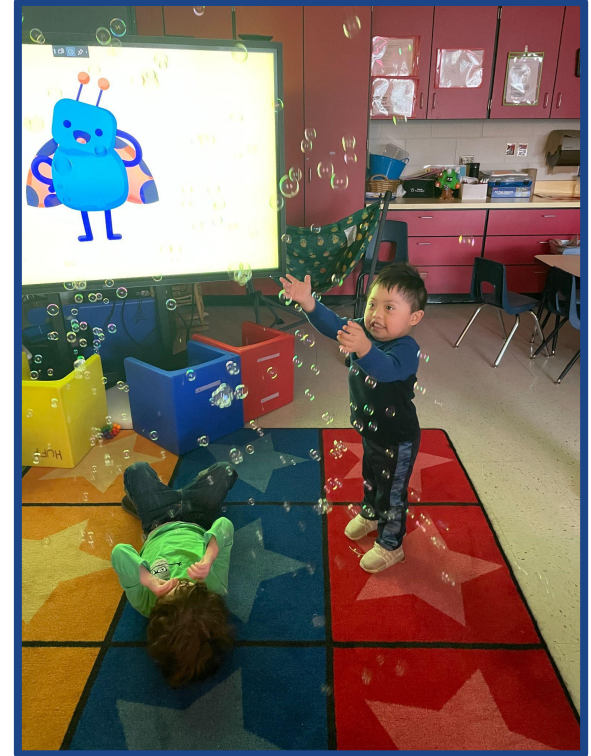


3-5 Years Old: Why Preschool?

- Children that attend are more likely to attend school regularly and take more challenging classes than their peers that did not attend. (Education Week, March 2022)
- The Perry study, the largest life span study of children that participated in preschool, found that:
 - kids who received quality early childhood education were less likely to be enrolled in special education classes;
 - more likely to become good junior high students; and
 - far more likely to graduate from high school.

The Perry preschoolers:

- were four times more likely than non-preschoolers to make a living wage.
- three times more likely to own their own home and twice as many avoided welfare.
- had fewer teenage pregnancies, divorced less and fewer ended up in prison.





Office of Governor
JB Pritzker

Governor Pritzker Announces Proposal to Create Unified Early Childhood State Agency

Press Release - Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Governor Pritzker Announces 5,800 New Pre-K Spots Created by Smart Start

Press Release - Wednesday, January 17, 2024



Preschool by the numbers

2023-2024 School Year

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of children 3-5 in U-46 (according to IECAM Database) | 9,562 (includes some children K eligible) |
| Number of children in preschool in U-46 classrooms: | 1,419 |
| Number of new seats added this year: | 120 |
| Number of schools with preschool: | 11 |

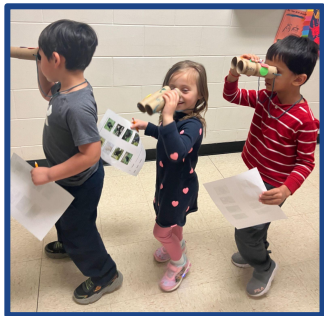
24-25 School Year

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Proposed number of preschool seats in U-46: | 1,648 |
| Proposed number of new seats: | 150 |
| Proposed number of schools with preschool: | 13 |



20%
increase of
preschool seats
in two years!

Who is served in our preschool programs



ISBE requires children be screened to determine if they meet the criteria for participation.

Full day preschool students must have a priority risk factor (50 points) and a total of 150 points minimum.

Half day preschool students must have 100 points total on the checklist.

The following are highest priority selection factors (50 points each):

(If a child presents with any one of these selection factors (numbers 1-4) the family should be considered the highest priority and be directly enrolled in the Preschool for All Expansion program or placed at the top of the waiting list.)

1. ____ (50) Homeless (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act)
2. ____ (50) Current or recent child welfare involvement (Ward of the State, foster care, intact family services, TPSN)
3. ____ (50) Child has IEP (for more than itinerant speech services) or is referred for special education evaluation
4. ____ (50) Family income at or below 50% FPL and/or receiving TANF

The following are other priority selection factors (25 points each):

5. ____ (25) Family income at or below 100% FPL
6. ____ (25) Primary caregiver did not complete high school/ No GED
7. ____ (25) Teen parent at birth of first child
8. ____ (25) Child was born outside of the United States or has one or more parent or caregiver born outside of the United States.
9. ____ (25) Parent or caregiver primarily speaks a language other than English at home.
10. ____ (25) Active Duty Military family
11. ____ (25) Screening indicates delays in development but no referral to special education at this time
12. ____ (25) Child has not previously participated in a formal early learning program

Our preschool program serves the children furthest from opportunity in our community.

Increasing Preschool Quality

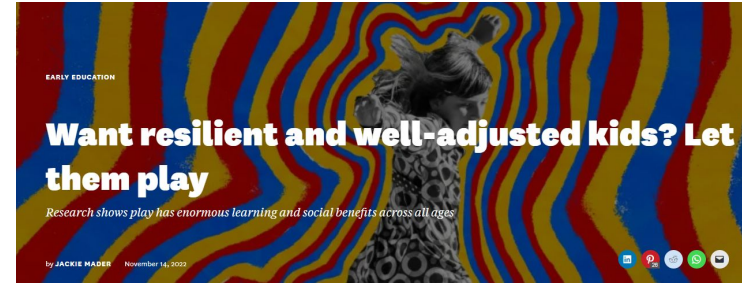
| | |
|------------|--|
| District | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Preschool Coordinator-Family Engagement Coordinator-Professional Learning for Administrators, Teachers and Paraprofessionals-Innovation Lab created with 4 classrooms to serve as model classrooms in our district and trial instructional practices prior to becoming department classroom expectations |
| Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Department leaders attending rigor walks and conducted early learning walkthroughs with principals and assistant principals-Solution finding meetings to support building leaders and teams in serving preschoolers. |
| Classrooms | <ul style="list-style-type: none">-New curriculum units implemented with supporting books and materials-Professional learning for teachers, including coaching by request-Full implementation of learning genie platform to share student progress with families (86% of all preschool and kindergarten families connected) |



Pandemic Impact on Kindergarteners

Our current kindergarteners were 2 years old in 2020, at two years old children:

- are beginning to develop empathy and recognize feelings of others.
- can communicate receptively and put two words together expressively.
- begin running and walking independently.
- begin to play with more than one toy at a time.



The presence or absence of play, particularly in child development, has a great deal to do with competency, resiliency, emotional health [and] brain size,” Brown said. Play is “not frivolous and not just for kids, but something that is an inherent part of human nature.”

As the country emerges from a pandemic during which children spent more time in front of screens, missing crucial play opportunities, the stakes are high. Thoughtful efforts to reintegrate play into daily routines can be crucial for children’s emotional, social, and academic health and progress.

Why Play?

"Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play, children learn how to learn."

-O.F. Donaldson, Play Researcher

Play is the most accessible approach to learning for young children.

Play is fun!

Research shows that play-based learning is essential for children's academic, social, emotional, & physical development.



Increasing instructional quality in kindergarten

2023-2024

- Teachers implemented new high interest theme based curricular units with new toys, books and materials to support student growth.
- 83% of families partnered with teachers through the Learning Genie application to support their children's academic success and strengthen relationships with their teacher and school.
- Professional learning was provided to teachers and administrators to support our students needs.



In the past two years, **FIVE** school districts have visited our kindergarten to learn from our success!

Changing our Practices to Meet the Needs of our Youngest Students

Conditions:

Increased opportunities for strengthening family/school connections

Literacy:

Biliteracy trajectory

Phonological awareness resource

Increasing interaction with grade level text

Numeracy:

Using play to support mathematical thinking

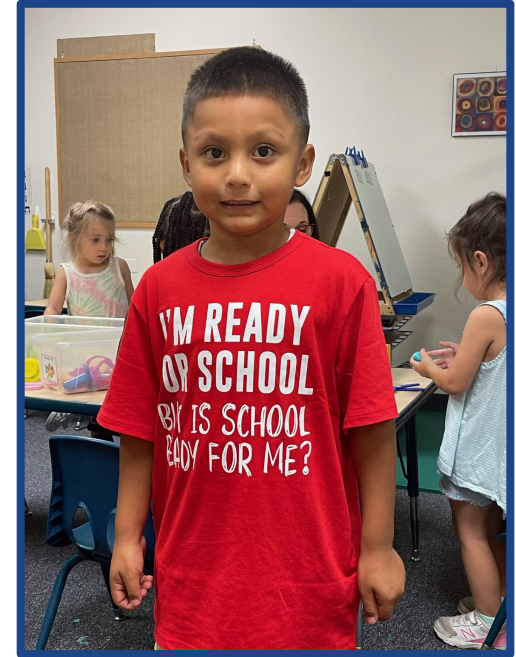
Number sense of quantity lesson development and alignment



Up next year: begin to build a birth through second grade developmentally appropriate teaching and learning scope and sequence.

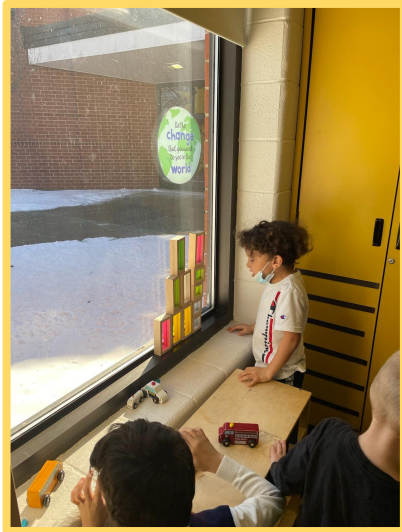
Strengthening Kindergarten Transition

| Time Frame | Effort | Purpose |
|---------------|---|---|
| February 2024 | Kindergarten Preview: return to Kindergarten Registration in person at schools | Begin relationships with students/families, allow them to “meet” the school and office staff, reduce anxiety |
| Summer 2024 | Playground Play Date with the Principal | Strengthen relationship between families/students/ Principals, build familiarity with the school and reduce anxiety |
| August 2024 | Kindergarten Orientation | Same as above and meet your child’s teacher! |



Vision for the Future of Early Learning in U-46

*Reduce
Barriers*



*Increase
Opportunities*



*Greater
Readiness*



*Improved
Outcomes*



Thank you for all of your support
of our early learning work!

