

preschool  
PROMISE



# Pivoting with Purpose: Powering through COVID-19

2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR PROGRESS REPORT • ISSUED DECEMBER 2020

# 2019-20 will be remembered for COVID-19



Deborah

Like organizations all across our community and country, Preschool Promise was profoundly tested in the 2019-20 school year. **The COVID-19 pandemic demanded we respond, innovate and pivot, in recognition that children, families and early learning professionals were facing daunting challenges.** While there have been heroes in many places, these educators and caregivers did not waver when children needed them!

All of the progress and success that we share in this report occurred in the face of unprecedented times. We're immensely proud of all that's been accomplished, but **we can't emphasize enough that the achievements were only possible because of the critical work of our partners who work on the front lines with young children.** We are in awe of them.

Just to note 3 highlights:

**Children enrolled at Preschool Promise sites were more ready for Kindergarten than children attending other programs or not attending Preschool.**

**The impact of attending Preschool Promise sites is demonstrable for all children, and especially Black children who historically have lacked opportunities.**

**Two-thirds of early learning professionals engaged in evidence-based professional development to improve their instruction and to ensure all children succeed in their classrooms.**

While there's much to celebrate, we have to remember that **when we get to the other side of this health crisis, so much of what we've lost will continue to disadvantage young learners.** Children who haven't been in Preschool or who haven't learned as much because of missing school or moving to a virtual environment are likely to start Kindergarten *more* behind. The trauma they and their families have experienced – whether they've lost a loved one, gone hungry, been evicted, been laid off or suffered from physical or mental health issues – will be lasting. **There are no vaccines for lost learning and the impact of trauma.**

Our commitment to getting all children fully ready for Kindergarten and minimizing the impact of Coronavirus and the racial inequities that have been brought to the fore this year has never been greater. **We are grateful for your continued support for children.**

Sincerely,

**Deborah Feldman, President**  
Preschool Promise Board of Directors  
CEO, Dayton Children's Hospital

**Robyn Lightcap, Executive Director**  
Dayton-Montgomery County  
Preschool Promise

## VISION

ALL Montgomery County children are ready for Kindergarten.

## MISSION

Preschool Promise ensures that children are ready for Kindergarten by equipping Preschools and families with exceptional support, coaching & education.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Focusing on what matters ..... 3
- COVID-19 changed everything ..... 5
- Preschool Promise's impact ..... 7
- Making a difference for Black children ..... 9
- Reaching more children ..... 11
- Teachers love learning ..... 13
- Step Up to Quality initiative ..... 14
- Preschool Promise keeps innovating ..... 15
- Big ideas, new possibilities ..... 17
- Improving classroom quality is critical ..... 19
- Board of Directors and sponsors ..... 21
- Preschool Promise Partner sites ..... 22

## ABOUT PRESCHOOL PROMISE

Preschool Promise is dedicated to promising Montgomery County 4-year-olds one year of high quality, accessible and affordable Preschool, prioritizing children who lack opportunity, including Black, Hispanic and Appalachian children. The initiative is generously supported by the City of Dayton, Montgomery County and philanthropic organizations.

### Our work is rooted in 3 pillars:

- **Educating the community about the power of Preschool**
- **Expanding the quality of our community's Preschools**
- **Assisting families in finding and affording high quality Preschools**

Thanks to a robust recruiting and education campaign, **nearly 2,000 children benefited** from Preschool Promise's work in 2019-20. **We partnered with 83 Preschools** that are committed to continuously improving their instruction through evidence-based professional development and coaching. We supported families by **providing free Books-of-the-Month and sending text messages and monthly postcards about the importance of strong attendance and continuing to learn at home.** We provide **tuition assistance** on a sliding-scale to all families who are not eligible for free Preschool.



# Focusing on what matters

The 2019–20 school year started like all others — full of possibility and excitement. Then in 2020, COVID-19 happened, resulting in the shutdown of Ohio’s Preschools and child care programs. The exceptional work that was happening prior to the pandemic — and all that happened during it — is a testament to early learning professionals’ commitment. They persevered under the most stressful and uncertain times.



## Our focus is to support children and families and lift up partner programs



### How we’re engaging families

Families are a child’s first and best teacher. But being a great parent is hard work, and none of us is born knowing all we need to know. When we share ideas about teaching children at home and positive parenting, families are eager to do what’s best for their child.

- ✓ We provided a free Book-of-the-Month to Preschool Promise families to read at home.
- ✓ With our partner Ready4K, we sent 3 text messages every week to families about how to help their child get ready for Kindergarten.
- ✓ We continued an attendance awareness program, emphasizing that children get the most benefit from Preschool if they have a 90% or better attendance rate.
- ✓ 900 Dayton families participated in our STAR Attendance program, receiving \$25 each month their child had at least a 90% attendance rate.
- ✓ Thanks to funding from the COVID-19 Response Fund, led by The Dayton Foundation and United Way, we provided more than 100 families with financial assistance when pandemic child care programs were only open to essential workers.

### How we’re improving quality

Our local data show that when teachers take part in evidence-based professional development and then practice what they learn in their classrooms, young learners improve their Kindergarten readiness skills. Because of COVID-19, we weren’t able to assess teachers and students in Spring 2020, but we know that connecting with students and high quality instruction drive up children’s success.

- ✓ We spent more than half of our budget on improving quality instruction.
- ✓ Two-thirds of administrators and teachers in Preschool Promise classrooms participated in professional development.
- ✓ We moved all of our professional development online so teachers could keep learning even as COVID-19 kept them from in-person instruction.
- ✓ We awarded \$750,000 in “Quality Dollars” to programs to buy books, teaching toys, curriculum and more.
- ✓ We supplemented early learning professionals’ woefully inadequate compensation by paying stipends for their participation in professional development.

### How we’re working for racial, ethnic and gender equity

Based on data disaggregated by race, ethnicity and gender, we know that certain demographic groups of children are less likely to be fully ready for Kindergarten. Specifically, our Black preschoolers and especially our Black boys, are not attending Preschool as frequently and they are not scoring as high on assessments.

We acknowledge that systemic racism and implicit bias prevent too many children from succeeding in the classroom. The problem is not lack of ability on the children’s part. Rather, we’re not reaching them.

Early learning professionals at Preschool Promise partner sites are committed to learning how they can support children who are not sufficiently benefiting from Preschool.

- ✓ We’re integrating culturally responsive teaching into all of our professional development.
- ✓ We offered continued professional development focused on creating boy-friendly classrooms.
- ✓ We focus our recruiting on families who are experiencing poverty and that have been historically marginalized.
- ✓ We’re disaggregating data and educating our staff, coaches, parents, teachers and administrators about opportunity gaps.





# COVID-19 changed everything

## **When the pandemic happened, Preschool Promise pivoted.**

First, Preschools and child care programs were ordered to close. Then only pandemic centers were allowed to operate. Suddenly, early learning and child care professionals were standing up totally new operations – with fewer children, significantly greater expenses and less funding and tuition.

Even in August, when programs were allowed to go back to pre-COVID-19 rules relating to the number of children allowed in classrooms and more sustainable child-to-teacher ratios, Preschools and child care programs faced crushing financial demands.

- **We helped Montgomery County's 50 temporary pandemic child care centers navigate ever-changing health and safety rules** when only pandemic programs were allowed to operate.
- **We provided technical assistance to our 83 partner Preschools and Montgomery County's 300 child care programs to get loans and grants** from federal agencies, the State of Ohio and Montgomery County to weather COVID-19.
- **We continued to pay programs their Preschool Promise tuition assistance and "Quality Dollars" even when they were closed** to help with their fixed costs. The intent was to ensure programs would be there for children when Ohio re-opened.

- **We served on the State of Ohio's strike force that determined how to support child care during the COVID-19 crisis**, providing important information about what was happening on the ground.
- **We sent families Play Boxes to assist them with the sudden closure of in-person learning** so they could help their children learn at home.

In Summer 2020, for our class of 2020–21 children, we created

**preschool  
PROMISE+**

Preschool Promise PLUS because so many children couldn't regularly attend in-person learning during the pandemic. All families who join — regardless of whether their child is attending a Preschool Promise partner school — receive a tablet preloaded with the popular, research-based *ABC Mouse* learning app, a data plan if needed, monthly learning Play Boxes, our Books-of-the-Month and monthly postcards with important Kindergarten Readiness tips.

**All these benefits are free! We can't let COVID-19 stop children from getting ready for Kindergarten!**



# Preschool Promise students are more ready for Kindergarten

When children start behind in Kindergarten, too often they stay behind – with the gap growing ever wider year over year.

**Preschool Promise partner programs are getting more children ready for Kindergarten! We know that because of their performance on Ohio's mandatory Kindergarten readiness assessment.**

Ohio requires all incoming Kindergartners to be assessed for their readiness to begin school. The KRA – short for Kindergarten Readiness Assessment – categorizes children into 3 bands: **Demonstrating Readiness, Approaching Readiness** and **Emerging Readiness**. Given by Kindergarten

teachers, this assessment tests children in 4 areas: social-emotional skills; language and literacy; math; and physical well-being and motor development.

Our big goal is to drive up the number of children attending Preschool Promise partner sites who score in the highest band of Demonstrating Readiness.

**Thanks to our community's early childhood educators, the percentage of Preschool Promise children meeting that benchmark, as compared to those attending other Preschools or not at all, is impressive.**

While we're helping more children get ready for Kindergarten, we have more work to do. Too few children in Dayton and Kettering tested Demonstrating Readiness – 28% in Dayton Public Schools and 37% in Kettering City Schools. The Ohio average is 41%.

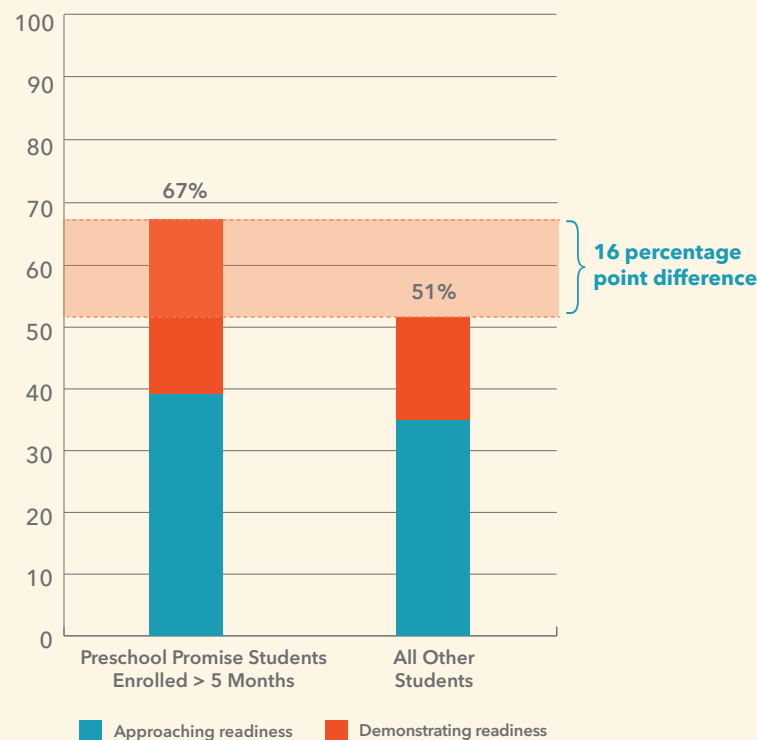
Another challenge is that the percentage of Preschool Promise children scoring Demonstrating Readiness dipped 4.1 points in Dayton Public Schools and 5.6 points for Kettering City Schools for the 2018-19 Kindergarten class.

While these results are concerning, it's important to note that the KRA is not norm-referenced, making

it difficult to accurately compare one year's class of Kindergartners to another. The assessment also requires teachers to make some subjective observations, which also can lead to results varying from year-to-year. Finally, analyzing relatively small cohorts of children (at the school district level or county level vs. statewide data) inherently allows for inaccuracy.

While the KRA is an important measure of accountability, our analysis is that it's highly unlikely that children's readiness differed as widely from 2017-18 to 2018-19 as the percentages suggest.

KRA results for Dayton Public Schools Kindergartners attending Preschool Promise sites vs. other children



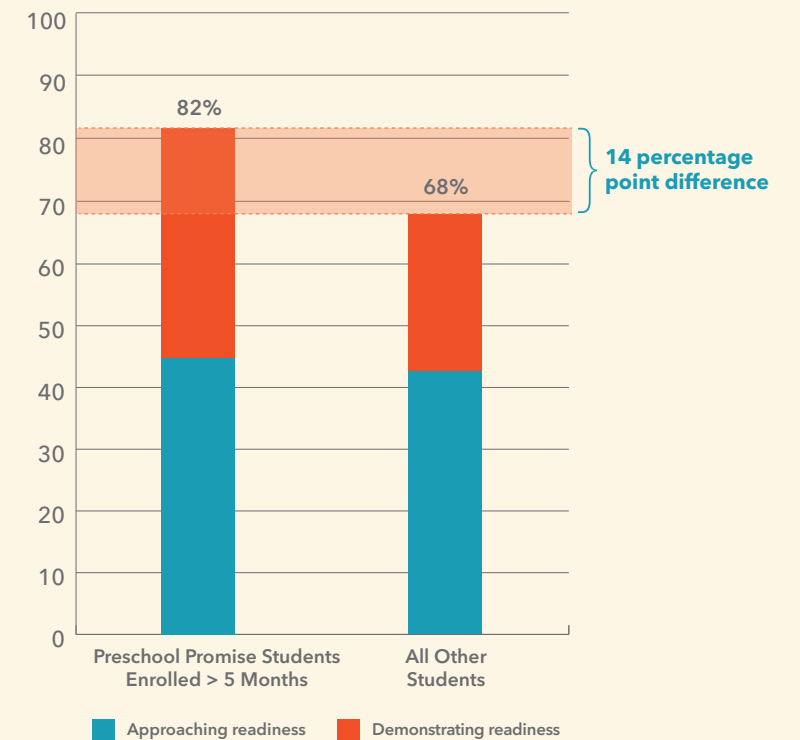
Preschool Promise Students in Dayton are more ready for Kindergarten

*Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data are always a year behind – these results are for children who attended Preschool in 2018-19, not 2019-20.*

Preschool Promise Students in Kettering are more ready for Kindergarten

*Kindergarten Readiness Assessment data are always a year behind – these results are for children who attended Preschool in 2018-19, not 2019-20.*

KRA results for Kettering City Schools Kindergartners attending Preschool Promise sites vs. other children



# Preschool Promise is making a difference... especially for Black children

## We are committed to closing the gap between Black and white children in their readiness for Kindergarten

**That gap exists because our systems are failing too many Black children – not because Black children lack the ability to learn and excel.**

Both Black and white children who attend Preschool Promise partner sites are making exceptional progress relative to children who attend non-Preschool Promise programs or don't attend Preschool at all. And our impact is greatest on children of color.

**Still, the challenge to close the Kindergarten readiness gap between Black and white students remains.**

## Our strategies to bridge the learning gap

Train teachers in culturally-responsive teaching

Work to eliminate implicit bias in the classroom and in Preschools' policies and procedures

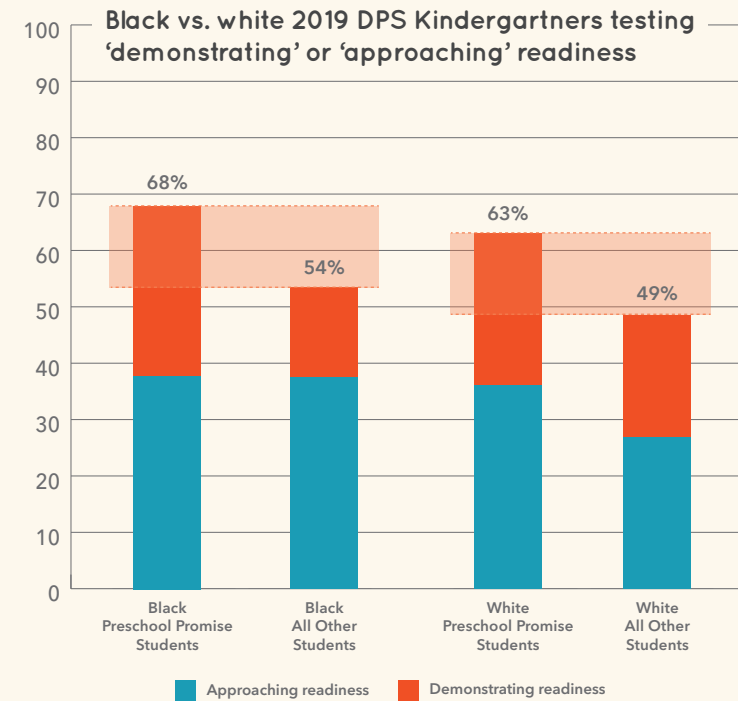
Help teachers create boy-friendly classrooms

Assist programs to recruit more Black teachers, particularly Black male teachers

Create a working group composed of largely Black men around transforming Preschool to ensure programs meet Black boys' needs

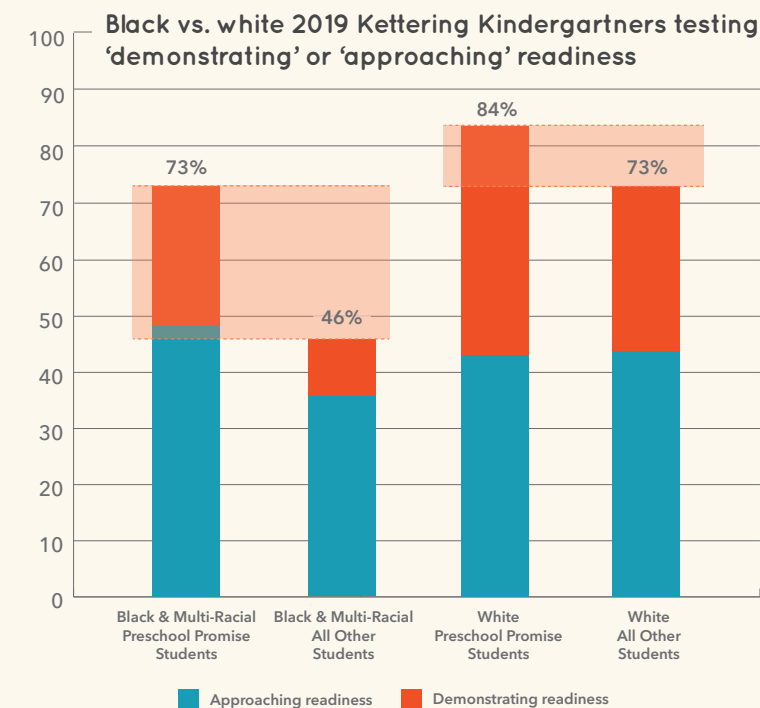
Investigate creating non-traditional Preschools that appeal to families who aren't sending their child to Preschool

Increase engagement with families about the importance of children having a 90% or better attendance rate through our STAR Attendance incentive program, once the COVID-19 pandemic allows for regular, in-person attendance



The percentage of both Black and white students 'approaching' or 'demonstrating' readiness was **14 percentage points greater** for those enrolled in Preschool Promise at least five months.

**Preschool Promise is impacting all Dayton children**



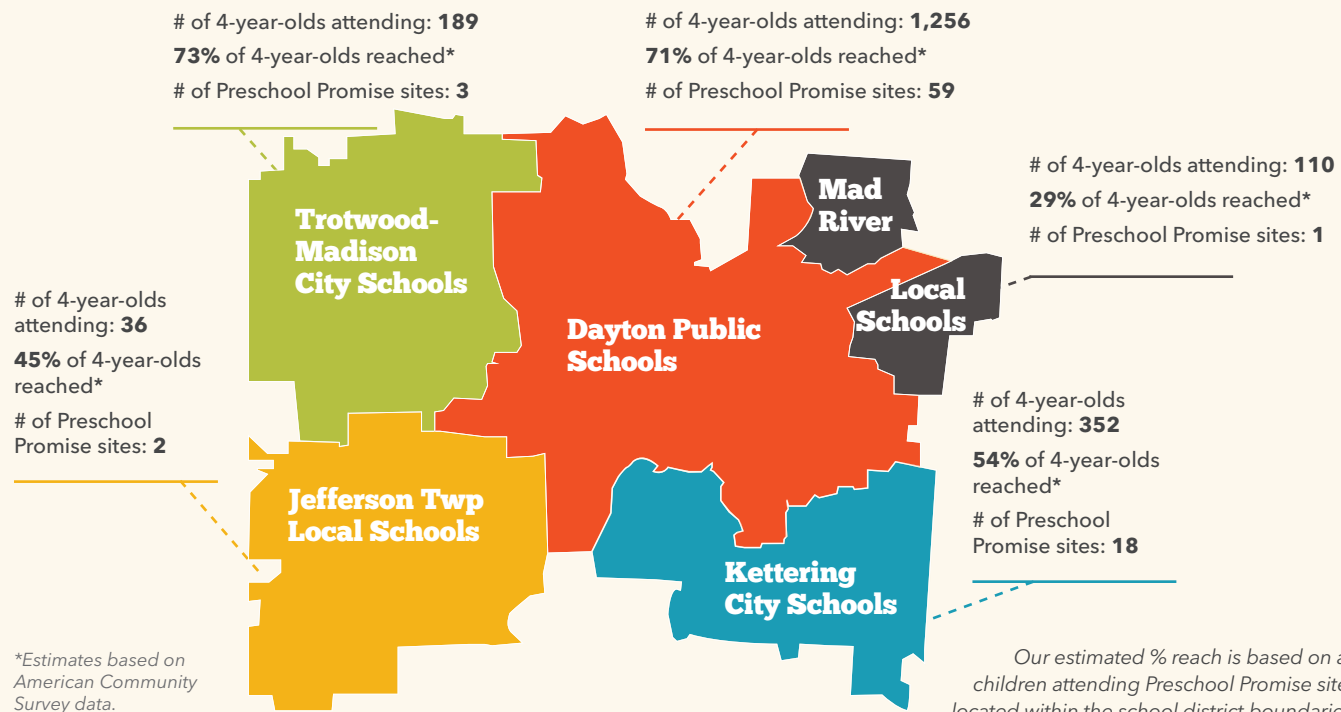
The percentage of Black and multi-racial students 'approaching' or 'demonstrating' Kindergarten readiness was **27 percentage points greater** for those enrolled in Preschool Promise – **11 percentage points greater** for whites.

**Preschool Promise is impacting all Kettering children**

# Preschool Promise expanded and reached more children

**We reached nearly 2,000 children – 100 more than in 2018-19**

4-year-olds attending Preschool Promise sites in the 2019-20 school year



**We expanded in Jefferson Twp., Mad River Twp. and Trotwood-Madison in 2019-20, thanks to generous additional investment from Montgomery County.**

We're excited that more children attended Preschool Promise sites – evidence of our work to spread the word about the power of Preschool. But, despite impressive outreach efforts, our growth came from our expansion

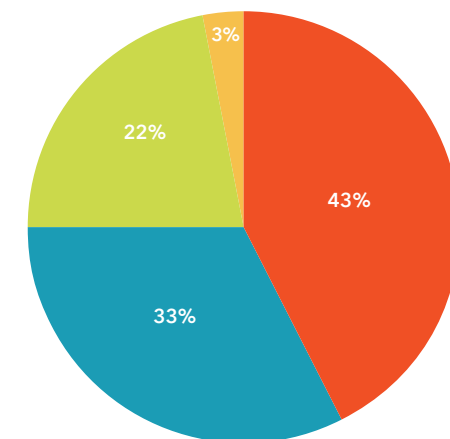
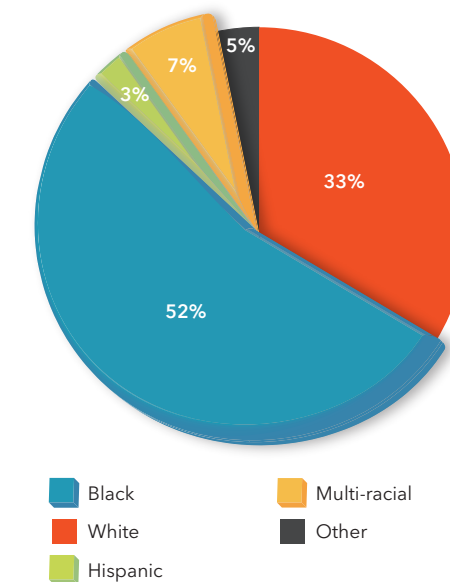
into Trotwood-Madison, Jefferson Twp., and one site in Mad River. We did not increase enrollment in Dayton and Kettering.

All families need to know that children are more likely to start school on track if they've been to Preschool. We will strengthen our in-the-neighborhood outreach to find children who are not attending Preschool.

*Our estimated % reach is based on all children attending Preschool Promise sites located within the school district boundaries, which includes some children who are not residents of that school district.*

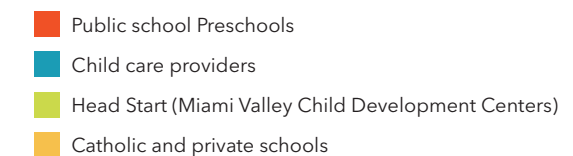
Race of children attending Preschool Promise sites, 2019-20

**More than 60% of children we supported were Black or brown**



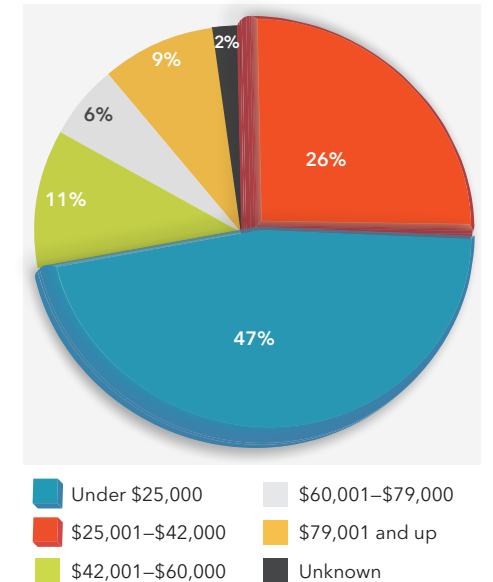
Choice of program type for children attending Preschool Promise sites, 2019-20

**55% of our families enroll their child at a Child Care/Head Start program, while nearly half enroll at a public or Catholic/private school**



Socio-economic status of children attending Preschool Promise sites, 2019-20

**Nearly 75% of our families have household incomes below \$42,000**



**Getting out the message about the importance of attending Preschool in the 2020-21 school year and continuing to increase enrollment will be an immense challenge in light of COVID-19.**





## More children are in quality classrooms

Thanks to Montgomery County's continued investment, our programs rate highly under Ohio's *Step Up to Quality* Star-Rating initiative.

All Preschool Promise programs must participate in *Step Up* and earn ratings from 1 Star to 5 Stars. As programs move up the Star ladder, the distinctions are harder to earn, requiring more qualified staff, more intentional instruction and family engagement, and more.



Preschool Promise sites that are rated 3-Star or higher — up by 20 percentage points since 2017



4 of 5 Preschool Promise students are enrolled in 5-Star programs

## Teachers love learning

Nearly 2/3 of teachers in Preschool Promise classrooms participated in intensive, ongoing and evidence-based professional development.

This is testament to their commitment to children and their eagerness to keep improving. Many of the 400-plus teachers and administrators in Preschool Promise partner programs seized multiple opportunities to increase their skills.

When COVID-19 prevented meeting in person, we pivoted to all virtual instruction.

Over the 2019-20 school year, we offered:

**16 nine-month-long Professional Learning Communities**

**1,234 hours of personalized coaching for teachers**

**22 multi-day trainings**

**7 workshops**

We are working to incorporate culturally-responsive teaching practices and anti-racist principles in all Preschool Promise professional development. Teachers in Preschool Promise programs understand that children of color and boys — particularly Black boys — too often don't get what they need from Preschool. It's on adults — not children — to change that.





# Preschool Promise keeps innovating

Even before COVID-19, we were committed to innovating.



We partnered with What Works Cities and Results for America to pilot a texting campaign encouraging families to ensure their child's strong attendance. Analysis by the University of Dayton Business Research Group found that, after controlling for other variables, this initiative improved attendance.

We continued our STAR Attendance initiative that provides Dayton families \$25 each month their child has a 90% or better attendance rate. Again this year, analysis by the University of Dayton Business Research Group found this initiative improved attendance.

An attendance awareness pilot program with Miami Valley Child Development Centers showed important success. Bus drivers and monitors were deputized to be Attendance Champions with Head Start children, all of whom are experiencing high levels of poverty. Attendance for all young learners, but particularly those attending part-time and who have the lowest attendance rates, improved.

We've moved all of our professional development online, with no drop in teacher participation. We're leveraging technology to ensure teachers continue to get personalized coaching during the pandemic. Teachers videotape themselves with Swivl™, which uses a small robot to track their interactions with children. Coaches and teachers debrief later.

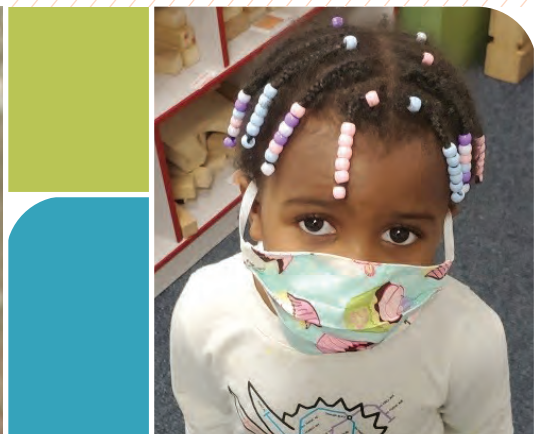


# We're identifying **BIG** ideas and new possibilities

When we analyze data and talk with families, so many challenges can be traced to lack of equity. That's not unique to initiatives like ours.

While inequities abounded before COVID-19, the pandemic has vividly exposed the depth of systemic racism and society's persistent inequities for people of color and those experiencing poverty. It is they who have borne the brunt of the economic, social and health consequences of the pandemic. Their children will pay a lasting price, too.

That makes our mission to ensure all children start school on track even more urgent.



**Preschool Promise is committed to ensuring that all of our policies and efforts foster equity. We are making that commitment real by:**

**Focusing on improving Preschool attendance for boys, particularly Black boys.** Specifically, we're investigating creating non-traditional Preschools, and we're organizing a work group of largely Black men to help us better meet need the needs of Black boys and boys generally.

**We're joining with partners to create education pathways for early learning professionals, aiming particularly at recruiting women and men of color.** Just over 40% of Black Preschool Promise children have a Black teacher. Having a teacher who looks like you is important. Research with older children correlates this experience with greater school success.

**We'll keep finding new ways to engage families.** Our surveys show that more than 90% of Preschool Promise Black families highly rate our Books-of-the-Month, Ready4K texts and monthly postcards.

**We'll analyze data around how families are using learning apps we provided for free during COVID-19** and assess how they're engaging with the free Play Boxes we've sent to keep their children learning at home during the pandemic.

**We're continuing to look for more ways to use technology to reach more children,** expand coaching for teachers and increase access to professional development, especially for small programs that care for under-served children.

**We're looking for new ways to reach families who have not enrolled their children in Preschool –** with a more focused effort in neighborhoods and housing complexes.



# Improving classroom quality is critical

Just like last year, our biggest investment continues to be in improving instruction. **More than half of our budget is spent on providing intensive, ongoing, evidence-based professional development and coaching.**

While we offer some short workshops, we're particularly committed to leading 9-month-long Professional Learning Communities where administrators and teachers learn together and practice new skills over time. Our previous analysis of teachers trained in Conscious Discipline and improving their CLASS™ evaluations shows that their students test higher on readiness assessments.

This focus on training is a critical element of our success. **Too many early education professionals don't have access to professional development, and their pay doesn't reward them for earning degrees and credentials.** The average wage for Ohio child care workers is \$10.67 per hour – less than half the average hourly wage for other Ohio workers.\* Most of these essential workers are not provided benefits, and their poverty-level wages mean many qualify for public assistance.

To recognize early child care educators who commit to getting more training, we provide modest stipends for attending professional development. We also award "Promise Stipends" to educators who promise to have strong attendance at work; participate in professional development, including around culturally responsive teaching; remain in the same classroom all year; and join Preschool Promise activities, including sharing our Books-of-the-Month with their young learners.

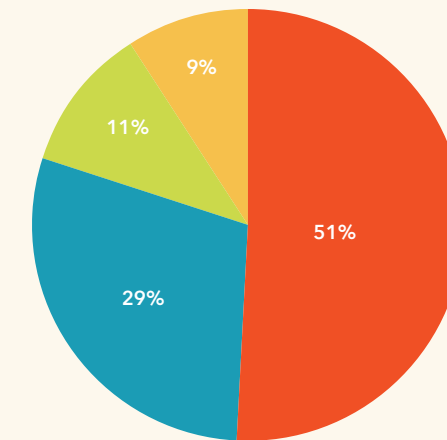
The average wage for Ohio child care workers is \$10.67 per hour – less than half the average hourly wage for other Ohio workers.\*

\*Groundwork Ohio, *The Workforce Behind the Workforce*, October 2020



## Audited financial data

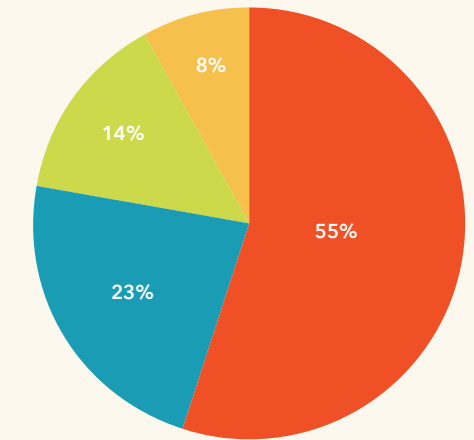
Actual Fiscal Year 2019



- Expanding Quality – \$2,738,345
- Assisting Families – \$1,557,846
- Educating the Community – \$616,179
- Evaluation and Administration – \$506,234

**\$5,418,604**

Budgeted Fiscal Year 2020



- Expanding Quality – \$4,163,526
- Assisting Families – \$1,738,333
- Educating the Community – \$1,044,360
- Evaluation and Administration – \$579,541

**\$7,525,760**

Preschool Promise's Fiscal Year is from January to December, though all data in this report relates to the traditional school year.

Thanks to Montgomery County's increased investment in 2019-20, Preschool Promise expanded to Jefferson Twp., Mad River Twp. and Trotwood-Madison. More than 300 4-year-olds attended Preschool Promise sites in these communities.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dayton Children's Hospital, CEO

**Anissa Lumpkin, Vice Chair**  
Air Force Research Laboratory,  
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Network Government Relations Officer

**Jamie Rippey**  
Accessibility Services Coordinator,  
Indiana University East

**Angeline Washington**  
Kornferry Futurestep,  
City of Dayton Parent

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS 2019-20 FUNDERS



## THANK YOU TO OUR KEY PARTNERS

4C for Children  
Boonshoft Museum of Discovery

Dayton Metro Library  
University of Dayton

## PRESCHOOL PROMISE PARTNER SITES

### DAYTON

ABC Child Development Center  
Blue Book Schools, Inc.  
Bombeck Family Learning Center  
Creative Corner – Hoover  
Creative Corner – Main  
Creative Corner – McCall  
Dayton Children's Hospital  
Child Care Center  
Dayton Christian Center  
DPS – Belle Haven  
DPS – Charity Adams  
DPS – Cleveland  
DPS – Eastmont  
DPS – Edison  
DPS – Fairview  
DPS – Horace Mann  
DPS – Kiser  
DPS – Louise Troy  
DPS – River's Edge  
DPS – Roosevelt (formerly Dayton Boys)  
DPS – Rosa Parks

DPS – Ruskin  
DPS – Valerie  
DPS – Westwood  
Gloria Dei Montessori  
Growing Seeds Child Care and  
Learning Center  
Immaculate Conception  
Inspire Me Learning Academy  
Jubilee  
Kids Nest II  
Learning Tree Academy  
Miami Valley CDC – EDEL  
Miami Valley CDC – Dayton View  
Miami Valley CDC – Twin Towers  
Miami Valley CDC – Miami View  
Miami Valley CDC – Stuart Patterson  
Miami Valley CDC – Kings Highway  
Miami Valley CDC – Rosa Parks  
Preschool Academy  
Mini University, Inc.  
Montgomery County's Mini University

Ms. Shelly's Place Learning Academy  
Next Generation Child Care  
Nita's Nurturing Nest  
Northern Hills Child Care Center, Inc.  
On Purpose Academy  
Playtime Nursery School  
Rainbow Years Child Care  
Sinclair Early Childhood Education Center  
Small World Early Childhood  
Speedie Daycare  
Stepping Stones Learning Center  
Sweet As Honey Learning Center  
St. Anthony YMCA Preschool  
The Word Youth Center  
United Rehabilitation Services  
Wee Care  
West Park Academy (Richard Allen)  
Youthland Academy of Dayton  
YMCA Grace Child Development Center  
Your Children First – Main Campus

### KETTERING

Busy Bees Family Child Care  
(Patty Bechstein)  
Christ United Methodist Church  
Creative World of Learning  
Harmony Creek Child Care  
Kettering Schools – Beavertown  
Kettering Schools – Greenmont  
Kettering Schools – Indian Riffle  
Kettering Schools – John F. Kennedy  
Kettering Schools – Kettering Early  
Childhood Education Center  
Kettering Schools – Oakview  
Kiddie Kampus East  
KinderCare Learning Center – Ebert  
KinderCare Learning Center – Stroop  
Miami Valley CDC – Moraine Meadows  
Tender Loving Care  
Wee Haven  
Wenzler Day Care and Learning Center, Inc.  
YMCA of Greater Dayton – South Branch

### JEFFERSON TWP.

Learning Tree Farm Nature Preschool  
Miami Valley CDC – Blairwood

### MAD RIVER TWP.

Mad River Early Learning Center

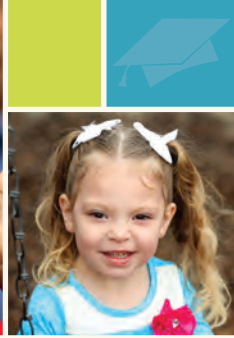
### TROTWOOD-MADISON

Miami Valley CDC – MET  
Mother Brunner  
Trotwood Early Learning Center



**“The kids are always so excited when I hold up the Book-of-the-Month to read at circle time. The Preschool Promise children always shout out, ‘I have that book!’”**





## What Preschool Promise parents say

‘What an amazing activity box we received! My son was so excited to see his new “school things” since he is missing school and his friends. You are an amazing program and group of people. We’re so lucky to have your support through COVID-19!’

‘My son got his activity box and package of goodies. It made his day. Preschool Promise has helped us so much! **We are so thankful.** Please continue to do what you’re doing. You’re helping a lot of families.’

‘My daughter is excelling in her PreK program! Excellent teaching of social skills and curriculum. Thanks to Preschool Promise!’

STAY IN TOUCH:

[f/PreschoolPromiseMC](#) | [t/PPromiseMC](#) | [i/PPromiseMC](#)

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