

### Parents, We Welcome Your Partnership in Your Child's Prekindergarten Program! *submitted by Dr. Robin Hooper*

***There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.***

*-Nelson Mandela*



During my conversations with family members of our entering prekindergarten students on phone calls and at recruitment and orientation events this summer, I have noted the excitement of our incoming students and their families regarding the upcoming year. The eagerness of our students is apparent in the expressions on their faces and the comments they make. It is this strong desire on the part of our youngest students and their families to enter our Pre-K program that is our biggest asset in developing strong partnerships with families. Strong partnerships require commitment and clear communication on the part of families and prekindergarten staff to ensure the success of our students.

The Early Childhood Department staff, principals, prekindergarten staff and district staff are charged with providing clear communication and support to families enrolling their children in the prekindergarten program. Communications are provided through the monthly UPK newsletter, the prekindergarten webpage on the district website (<http://www.rcsdk12.org/prek>) classroom newsletters, daily communications and through our main phone line at the department (262-8140.) Families are encouraged to contact their child's teacher or the early childhood department with any questions they have about the program or their child's progress.

Families can support their children by helping them develop good work habits and routines that lead to school success. Our incoming four-year-old prekindergarten students will be receiving a back pack with our UPK logo on it at the beginning of the school year. We are encouraging families to help children become accustomed to using the back pack daily to take communications, homework and books to and from school. Family members are also encouraged to check the contents of the back pack daily to review notes from the classroom, homework and newsletters as part of the regular routine at home. By establishing this process families will assist us in preparing our students for kindergarten.

Another way families can support their child's success in school is by establishing routines at home for bedtimes, meals, daily reading, and school attendance. Every day a child attends school brings them another step closer to achieving their academic goals. School attendance is a critical factor in supporting our students to be successful. We need family support to accomplish this goal. Please assist your child in attending school regularly. The number of students enrolled in our prekindergarten program has grown every year and the demand for spots in the program has increased annually. If your child is absent ten or more days during the year their enrollment in the program may be in jeopardy as we have waiting lists for several of our prek locations. If your child is absent for any reason please contact your child's teacher.

Finally, thank you for enrolling your child in our prekindergarten program. We are looking forward to our partnership with you during the upcoming year!

#### **Welcome Back!**

\*\*\*

**Save the date!  
November 6  
Superintendent's  
Conference Day**

\*\*\*

**Registration for  
this and other  
professional  
development will  
be online using  
avatar:**

[https://  
rochesterny.courseinsite.com](https://rochesterny.courseinsite.com)

## Professional Development for 2012-13

- The HighScope Classroom Learning Environment.** Facilitators will lead staff in an examination of the pre-school classroom using the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) as a guide. This is targeted for teachers new to the HighScope curriculum. 3 sessions: October 11, 25 and November 8, from 4:00—6:00 for a total of 6 hours.
- The HighScope Daily Routine.** Exploring and refining the preschool daily routine using the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) as a guide. This is appropriate for teachers new to the HighScope curriculum through intermediate level. 3 sessions: November 5, 19 and December 3, from 4:00—6:00 for a total of 6 hours.
- Adult-Child Interactions within the HighScope Curriculum.** Establishing a supportive climate using the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) as a guide. This course is appropriate for teachers with experience in HighScope through the advanced level. 4 sessions: January 14, 28, February 11 and March 4, 2013, from 4:00-6:00 for a total of 8 hours.
- Book Study: “I Know What Comes Next: Preschool Transition with Tears or Turmoil.”** Teachers will discuss the book and the application of concepts. Teachers will try out strategies from the book and share their impact with other participants. This session is appropriate for beginner through intermediate level teachers. 3 sessions: September 24, October 1 and 15, from 4:00—6:00 for a total of 6 hours.
- Book Study: “You Can’t Come to My Birthday Party: Conflict Resolution with Young Children.”** Teachers will discuss the book and its application. Teachers will try out strategies and share their impact with the other participants. This session is appropriate for teachers at the intermediate level. 4 sessions: March 7, 21, 28 and April 11, 2013, from 4:00—6:00 for a total of 8 hours.
- Please note that professional development classes are several sessions in length and participants must complete all sessions for credit. These sessions will be posted on avatar soon.

**\* The first District-Based Professional Development Day is scheduled for Wednesday, September 19. More details will be sent by email.**

## RECAP Classes for September

9/5	Fall entry of COR anecdotes begin n COMET	
9/11	RECAP Orientation	9:00—10:30
9/13	RECAP Orientation	4:00—5:30
9/18	COMET Training	9:00—10:30
9/20	COMET Training	4:00—5:30
9/25	COR Training	4:00—6:30
9/26	COR Training	9:00—11:30

These trainings are **essential for all new UPK teachers**. Look for more details from the Children’s Institute.

### Save these dates for Parents and Staff

Look for more information and let parents know to save the dates for these events.

### Greentopia 2012 WXXI Open House

on Saturday, September 15, offers interactive programming for both adults and children and is a nice complement to the Kids Zone activities which will be going on during the entire EcoFest. The RCSD Early Childhood Dept. will be offering hands-on activities at this free event.

### RCSD 2012 Symposium on November 3 @the Edison Complex

“Nurturing the Whole Child: Connecting Health & Wellness to Student Success”

## Backpacks for UPK Children



Backpacks will be delivered to all UPK sites to be given to our entering UPK students (4 year olds). Please use this tool (and encourage parents) to aid your communication with families and keep children’s belongings organized.

Since they are identical, identifying individual children’s bags can be a problem. For children’s security we should avoid writing their names on the outside (inside is good though). To reinforce the Growing Reader’s Curriculum, a good way to differentiate the bags would be by using each child’s “Letter Link.” Laminated individual letter links can be attached like luggage tags.

## First Report on Pupils Attending Preschool in 2011-12 and Their Achievement

*Submitted by Andrew MacGowan, Project Administrator, Office of Accountability*

The first batch of 2011-12 Pre-K student data has arrived (with more to come), courtesy of our colleagues at the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) team. They supported us in our annual completion of the State Education Department Universal Pre-K Final Report. We are highlighting here the reporting we submitted for the State's Universal Pre-K Annual report. This year the State directed us to report in the areas of language and literacy, cognition and social-emotional growth during the year.

The results from 2011-12 are fairly but not entirely consistent with previous years. Our Pre-K pupils grew significantly while in school, and we see on average over a year-and-a-half growth overall. Our students also grew quite significantly in social-emotional intelligence. We do see gaps; our students arrived in the fall with gaps, as we have always seen. But over the course of the year we do see real growth across all groups of our kids.

1. *Our Pre-K pupils arrived last September at different developmental levels and overall at about a six month gap:* We have seen this in all previous years, although this year the gap was slightly lower. Note that one year does not a trend make. Last year we saw about a six month developmental gap when the kids entered Pre-K. On average, Hispanic males arrived at the lowest levels, and also left at the lowest levels, as we have seen for years. Students with disabilities arrive approximately six months behind general education students and did not grow as robustly as general education students.

Although most years we see few ethnic differences per se, and have almost always seen gender differences, this year we see lower gender differences but higher racial/ethnic differences. Again, one year does not a trend make, but this bears watching. Of good note, boys and girls grew at the same overall high rates. White student arrived at higher levels than Black or Hispanic students, who were nearly identical in their developmental levels when they arrived in Pre-K in September.

2. *High overall rates of growth:* On language and literacy, and on overall cognition, as measured by the COR, our students grew at approximately 19 months overall growth. This is the *average* growth. The next point was something we were not required to report but we saw something we've never seen before – so it's not a trend, but nonetheless very positive: Overall, our kids grew two full years on the Math and Science subscale of the COR.

3. *The overwhelming majority of kids grow above their expected developmental levels:* Nearly 94% (93.8%, to be exact) of our students grew above their expected developmental trends.

4. *There is a smaller level of "absolute loss" compared to most years:* Sadly and as we have known, there are a portion of our students who leave at lower levels than they arrived. In previous analyses, we found nearly all of these pupils had undergone a traumatic family experience, not related to the instructional program. Since 1998, most years we have seen this proportion around 5% to 6%, with one year at over 10%. This year the number was lower, at 3.3%. The proportion of kids who grew at or below expected developmental trends was a small 2.9%.

5. *Students with disabilities on average arrived at lower levels than general education pupils, grew at lower levels in language and cognition than general education pupils, but grew at comparable levels in social-emotional intelligences as did general education pupils:* Not surprisingly, students with disabilities (as defined by having an IEP) arrived at lower developmental levels compared to general education students. In the achievement domains (including language, literacy and cognition) students with disabilities do grow over one year during their year in Pre-K, by approximately 14 months. General Education students arrive nearly half a year ahead, and grow on average approximately 20 months. By this past spring, the gap increased to nearly one full year. These data will be crucial in our forthcoming professional development, as we work to decrease the gap. Previous studies have suggested there is progress overall in Pre-K combined with kindergarten.

Continued on next page—Pupil Achievement



**Rochester City School District**  
Department of Early Childhood  
131 W. Broad St.  
Rochester, NY 14614



Phone: 585-262-8140  
Fax: 585-262-8273  
jeanne.herrick@rcsdk12.org  
www.rcsdk12.org/PreK

Continued from previous page—Pupil Achievement

However, while arriving at lower levels last fall in the social-emotional realm, students with disabilities grew at comparatively similar (and high) rates as did general education students. This is a most encouraging finding. Pre-K teachers and staff are well aware that students with disabilities at this age group cover a large spectrum, since no specific disability is designated at this young age. Students with minor speech issues are included with students with multiple handicapping conditions.

6. *High quality instruction matters and may be the best overall intervention that we have for kids with social-emotional problems:* The Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) forms that teachers complete online tell us an especially important fact: Our kids do grow socially and emotionally during the school year. We know that our kids come to us with an enormous number of stressors (a topic for a later essay). This year we looked at this domain in a slightly different light than in previous years. To get just a wee bit technical for a minute, our kids overall grew approximately *one-third of a standard deviation* in social emotional growth. *Huh?* OK, translated, this means they grew by a genuinely significant amount. To statisticians, that one-third standard deviation is pretty huge, actually. The most important take-away point is that *quality instruction can go a long way in helping kids within social-emotional realm, and we saw that here.*

On the whole, and with exceptions to which we must pay close attention, our Pre-K pupils grew substantially from September, 2011 through June, 2012. We need to work on closing gaps. That our students achieve as well as they do is the result of high quality teaching. It is essential that we have a high-quality evaluation system that tells us where to focus our limited resources.

*Quality is never an accident;  
it is always the result of high  
intention, sincere effort, intelligent  
direction, and skillful execution;  
it represents the wise choice of  
many alternatives.*  
-Willa A. Foster