

submitted by Dr. Robin Hooper

"Tell me and I forget.

Teach me and I remember.

Involve me and I understand."

-Benjamin Franklin



Many UPK students are now using iPads to increase their knowledge of Technology and the Common Core Content. Here, two students at School 44 support each other as they navigate a new application. Children are enjoying "teaching", each other how to find programs and figure out directions. iPads are being used to reinforce **sorting, counting, letter recognition, and problem solving.**

Reading with your Child is the Best Preparation for Kindergarten

The Rochester City School District is launching several new initiatives to better prepare our prekindergarten students for their transition into kindergarten in the fall. Currently, over 800 prek students have converted from attending half day programs to attending full day programs as of February 3rd. In addition, all prek classrooms are participating in a literacy initiative, "Read 500 Books before Kindergarten." The district is supporting this initiative by providing classroom lending libraries to all prekindergarten classrooms in our schools and community based organizations. These libraries support the development of literacy skills by providing books for students to take home to read with family members and independently. Prek teachers will be attending technology training sessions this month to learn how to use new computer applications with their prek students to support learning. Educational applications will be provided to all pre-kindergarten classrooms as an additional support to student's literacy skill development.

There are many ways our prek families can support the development of literacy skills. Some ways families can support literacy are included in the article written by Sara Fitts-Romig in this newsletter. Other things families can do to support reading include telling children that it is important to be able to read and showing them how reading is used in the every day world. Point out print on signs, packages, mail, clothing and every day items around them. Encourage children to identify letters and the sounds that letters make; particularly the letters in their names. In our prek classrooms we use the Letter Links program. Letter Links provides a picture that starts with the same sound as the letter at the beginning of each child's name. Talk to your child about their Letter Link and the Letter Links of their classmates. Reading books with your child is one of the best ways to support literacy; however if you are unable to read with your child arrange for a brother or sister or other family member to read with them. Reading can take place any time of day or in any location!

We will be holding our annual "Transition to Kindergarten Family Event" on Saturday, May 3rd, from 10:00 AM—2:00 PM at 500 Webster Avenue (School No. 33/ Ryan Center.) The event will feature learning activities for students and their families and students will receive "learning tools" to take with them to continue their learning at home. Parent workshops will take place throughout the event focused on the kindergarten programs offered by the district including bilingual programs, special education programs, general kindergarten and ways parents can support their children to transition successfully into kindergarten. Light refreshments will be provided at the event. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for this fun, informational event!

Connections

A Parent's Introduction to the NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core

Sarah Fitts-Romig, (formerly at) Lewis St. YMCA Pre-K

Before taking the lead teacher position at the Lewis St. YMCA UPK, I taught kindergarten for 12 years at RCSD School #33. I have had the unique perspective of observing students entering kindergarten with and without the benefits of pre-kindergarten. Without question, students without pre-K experience entered kindergarten with a deficit. Among other things, they didn't know the letters of the alphabet, couldn't write their names, or count to 5, and did not know the fundamentals of how stories are structured. Did these children eventually catch up with their peers? Yes, in most cases they met the kindergarten standards, but I don't believe it was easy for them. It was like asking two children to run as fast as they could to the finish line, but asking one child to run with both legs in a sack. On the flip side, what about the child that arrives at school fully prepared with strong foundational skills? Is that child being challenged to their full potential in a classroom where so much instructional time is devoted to basic skills?

The NYS Prekindergarten Learning Standards outline what it means to be prepared for kindergarten. Finally, parents can ask what it is their child should know by the end of pre-K and receive a clear and concise answer.

The following bulleted items are some areas where children are expected to demonstrate increasing awareness and competence. These have been taken from the NYS Prekindergarten Learning Standards in the English Language Arts and Literature Domain along with suggestions of activities parents can use at home to help their child.

Reading Standards: Literature and Informational Text and Suggestions for Parents

<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Supportive Home Activities</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and answer questions about details in a text. • Retell familiar stories. • Ask and answer questions about characters and major events in a story. • Describe the role of the author and illustrator. • Make connections between self, text, and the world around them. • Compare and contrast two stories related to the same topic. • Identify front cover and back cover. • Display correct orientation of a book. • Page turning skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit your local library regularly • Borrow books from your classroom. • Show your child how to hold a book and identify the front and back cover. • Talk about the work done by the author and illustrator. • Read aloud to your child each day and ask your child questions about the story.

Spending 10-20 minutes each day reading to your child and talking about these topics will support the work being done in the UPK classroom. Children learn from repeated exposure to concepts and gain understanding when allowed to talk about what they are learning. You don't need to purchase products marketed for parents. Often these workbooks are not developmentally appropriate and may turn your child off. Keep activities playful and fun. If your child is resistant to working with you, talk to your child's teacher about what is working and what is not.

The Power of Pausing to Read: Children and significant adults take time for each other and enjoy a story.

(CCLS: Domain 4, Communication Language and Literacy).



Maplewood YMCA: A guest captures the attention of these students as she shares a favorite story.



School 23: A parent joins students to read a story.

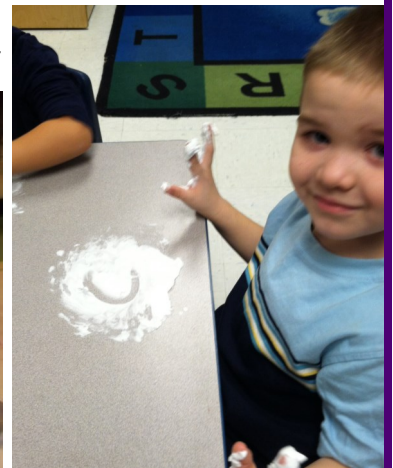
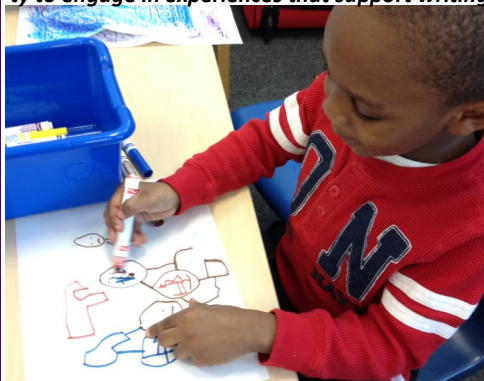
Using Household Items to Explore Snow. (CCLS: Domain 5, Cognition and Knowledge of the World, Science).



Students at Hart Street Head Start learn about the science of snow: measuring, experimenting with size and shape, predicting and more while using simple tools.

Many ways to write. (CCLS: Domain 2, Physical Development).

Students from Volunteers of America, Lewis Street YMCA and Carlson Metro YMCA have the opportunity to engage in experiences that support writing development.





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



Phone: 585-262-8140
Fax: 585-262-8273
sandra.hess@rcsdk12.org
margaret.spencer@rcsdk12.org
www.rcsdk12.org/PreK

Transition to Kindergarten Family Event
Saturday May 3, 2014
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
#33 School and Ryan Center
500 Webster Avenue

UPK CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE INVITED TO A SPECIAL EVENT!

The Rochester City School District Early Childhood Department conducts this event to support families in getting their children ready for Kindergarten. During this event participating families of our current Prekindergarten students who will be attending Kindergarten this fall will spend an hour or two engaging in fun, hands-on learning activities and will receive **FREE LEARNING MATERIALS!** This event will also feature parent workshops about kindergarten programs offered in the district, ways to develop kindergarten readiness at home and early literacy!

REGISTRATION FOR KINDERGARTEN AVAILABLE AT EVENT FOR KINDERGARTEN AND PRE- KINDERGARTEN. Bring: Birth Certificate; Picture ID; Proof of Address; Immunization record; Guardianship; IEP (if applicable).