

Universal Pre-K (UPK)

UPK offers free early learning opportunities to children 4 years of age. UPK creates a system of programs for four-year olds that meet the needs of all children including preschool children with disabilities. A key goal of UPK programming is to ensure access for all students, alignment with the NY State Learning Standards to ensure academic success. UPK programs are educationally-based, developmentally-appropriate in meeting the social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, cultural, and physical needs of children. A child's IEP can easily be implemented within the context of a UPK program. Additionally, UPK offers children socialization opportunities relationship building and experiences that build self determination and self esteem. It offers professionals opportunities to collaborate with a variety of stakeholders including; parents, teachers, education administrators, therapists and preschool special education administrators.

“Children are the worlds most valuable resource and it’s best hope for the future.”

John Fitzgerald Kennedy



DID YOU KNOW

- 75% of brain growth occurs before age 5.
- 85% of a person’s intellect, personality and social skills are also developed by age 5.
- Children in prekindergarten are 50% less likely to need special education services than children who had no prekindergarten.
- Children receiving quality early childhood experiences are 25% less likely to be held back by the end of the third grade.
- Early Childhood Programs are effective in preparing children for school, reducing rates of teen pregnancy and delinquency, and increasing rates of employment.
- Children who attended a high-quality preschool program had significantly higher income, home ownership and educational attainment later in life.
- UPK programming strengthens families by giving parents the resources and support they need to help their children get a good start.
- Children with disabilities can participate in UPK programs and receive preschool special education services while enrolled in UPK programs.

WHERE IS MY UPK?

DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO GO TO UPK?

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

To locate or find out if your school district has a UPK program, you can contact your local school district's administrative offices. UPK is a voluntary program for both districts and children at no cost to the parent. Parents and/or guardians may choose, but are not required, to enroll their children in a UPK program. To be eligible for UPK you must reside within a UPK-participating school district. Your child is eligible if he/she is 4 years of age on or before December 1st and eligible to attend kindergarten the following year. A child eligible to attend kindergarten is ***not eligible to attend UPK***.

Since UPK is a component of a school district, a student must be resident of the school district. Many of the same policies established for students in grades K-12 apply to UPK students. For example once enrolled in a UPK the attendance policy for students K-12 applies to UPK students. The school calendar adopted by the district for all students also applies to UPK students. Therefore if the district is in session 180 days, the UPK will also run on that same 180 day cycle. Children must be four years of age on or before December 1st of the school year, or old enough to attend kindergarten the next school year (children eligible for kindergarten cannot be enrolled in UPK).

Typically there are two possible models for a UPK program. Some programs run 5 days a week for a full day. The second model runs 5 days a week for 2.5 hours. It is the decision of the district to decide which model best serves its community.

Staff are highly trained and qualified to provide the best education to every child. NYS requires teachers to hold a valid teaching license and/or certification in the area of Early Childhood Education.

“A person's a person, no matter how small.”

Dr. Seuss

Benefits to Parents of UPK Children



- Parents are partners with the education programs serving their children, get involved in your child's early learning, this is a great way to bond with your child.
- Volunteer in the UPK programs, and learn about your child's education so you can support their learning at home.
- Parent Involvement early on provides opportunities for you to learn how to work with and effectively communicate with your children's teachers.

A SNAP SHOT OF A UPK/ PRESCHOOL DAY

Gross and Fine Motor Skills: In Pre-k children play outside every day, weather permitting. Playing outside helps develop children's muscles, improves coordination, and reinforces healthy habits. The playground is a great place for children to learn social skills such as taking turns, talking to others, making friends, and getting along.

Reading Aloud: In Pre-k Children listen to stories every day. They ask questions, learn new words, and discuss different parts of books. During this time, children develop listening, reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. They get excited to hear what will happen next and what they will learn each time the teacher turns the page.

Center/Choice Time: In Pre-k Children make decisions about where they will explore, discover, and learn each day. They learn independence by working by themselves or with other children during center/choice time activities. They read and write, build, cut, paint, and pretend.

Class Meeting: In Pre-k Children come together and become a community of learners, explorers, and friends. They discuss plans for the day. They build language skills by listening and responding to stories as well as singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes. They practice counting, look for patterns, and explore other math concepts.

Small Groups: In Pre-k Children spend focused time with the teacher and other students when they are in small groups. They develop new knowledge and practice what they learn with support from the teacher and other students.

Meal Time: In Pre-k Children have a role in getting ready for meal time. Meals are often set up in family style so children can serve themselves and continue learning social skills as they engage in rich conversations during meals. Teachers often eat with children, modeling manners and conversation.

Once, there was a tree...
and she loved a little boy.



SOURCE: *The Office of Early Childhood Education*

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/default.htm>

Do you have more questions about getting ready for kindergarten?



Check out the ECDC Bulletin on Kindergarten Readiness!
<http://ecdc.syr.edu/resources/bulletins/kindergarten-readiness/>

Looking for more copies of this bulletin? You can download it from our ECDC website or contact us.

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**WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
 THEY TEACH US.**



**Over 30 Years
 Caring for All Children**

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Parent Partnerships
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies
- Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Writing IEP Goals
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

ECDC services to families are free and confidential.

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