



PRE4CLE: The Cleveland Pre-K Implementation Plan

PRESS RELEASE

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CLEVELAND MAYOR, CMSD CEO, COUNTY EXECUTIVE ANNOUNCE PLANS TO EXPAND PRE-K IN CITY OF CLEVELAND *PRE4CLE plan calls for expansion of high quality pre-K to children in the city*

CLEVELAND, OHIO – The Cleveland Pre-K Task Force announced PRE4CLE, a plan to expand access to high-quality pre-K programs to children in the City of Cleveland. PRE4CLE is a major next step in implementing Cleveland’s Plan for Transforming Schools.

Starting in the 2014-2015 school year, PRE4CLE will increase the number of high quality pre-K seats available for four year olds in the City of Cleveland whose families want them to attend high-quality preschool. The plan will be rolled out to three year olds at a later date.

Plans are underway to help families address tuition and transportation concerns. Under this plan, in 2016, it is expected that at least 2,000 additional four-year old children will have enrolled in high quality pre-k. Full implementation of the plan is expected to cost \$15 million in the first year; public and private funds are being secured to fund the first year, including a two-year, \$1 million commitment from Cuyahoga County.

PRE4CLE will help pre-K providers meet state quality standards and work with the community to connect parents and families to available high-quality pre-K seats. Pre-K will be available at both CMSD schools and private providers that meet strict quality standards. Provider participation is voluntary; participating providers must have at least three stars under the state of Ohio’s *Step Up to Quality* consumer rating system. The plan calls for helping providers meet and exceed that threshold.

“Every child deserves an excellent education, and a high-quality preschool program is the place to start,” said Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson. “With PRE4CLE, we are taking an important first step in expanding access to high-quality preschool and working to fulfill one of the key goals of the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools.”

Quality is the cornerstone of the pre-K plan, said Eric Gordon, CEO of Cleveland Metropolitan School District. “The goal here is to ensure that every child in the City of

Cleveland will enter Kindergarten ready to succeed in school," Gordon said. "The Cleveland Plan seeks to ensure every child in Cleveland attends a high quality school and every neighborhood has a multitude of great options from which families can choose. A fundamental part of improving the quality of our schools is offering high quality pre-K because prepared Kindergarteners eventually become well prepared high school graduates."

The plan has strict benchmarks and goals by which the success of the investment will be measured. By 2018, PRE4CLE expects to double the proportion of PRE4CLE children who score at or above the Cuyahoga County mean on the state's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment compared to children currently entering CMSD Kindergarten. By 2016, PRE4CLE expects to show statistically significant developmental gains for children in PRE4CLE pre-K schools

Cuyahoga County Executive Ed FitzGerald noted that the county is a long-time supporter and leader in promoting and funding high-quality early education through its public-private partnership, *Invest in Children*, and its Universal Pre-K program. Cuyahoga County has increased its investment in pre-K by \$2 million through each of its biennium budgets and now spends \$4.5 million per year on pre-K. The county has pledged \$1 million over two years to support PRE4CLE.

"We know there will be a return on this investment," FitzGerald said. "The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that quality early childhood programs for low-income children generate an overall 16% rate of return on investment. This translates into higher lifetime earnings and reduced dependence on welfare, both will yield a significant return on investment for our community."

The PRE4CLE Task Force included more than 50 teachers, administrators, early childhood providers, early childhood education experts, business and labor professionals who worked together during the past four months to create a plan to achieve this goal of expanding high quality preschool in Cleveland. The Cleveland Pre-K Task Force also worked with the Neighborhood Leadership Institute to listen to the needs and concerns of nearly 300 parents, caregivers, teachers and community leaders through neighborhood focus groups and surveys, to ensure that the pre-K plan created for Cleveland would be relevant and of value to the city's families. Eric Gordon, alongside Marcia Egbert, Senior Program Officer at The George Gund Foundation, co-chaired the task force.

"PRE4CLE will work to ensure that any family in Cleveland who wants pre-K for their child will be able to send them to a nurturing and engaging place, so they can walk into Kindergarten ready to succeed," Egbert said. "The George Gund Foundation is a supporter of this PRE4CLE plan because we agree that high-quality early learning opportunities are key to Kindergarten readiness, and we believe tremendous results can be achieved when children have high-quality preschool experiences."

Full copies of the PRE4CLE report are available at www.pre4cle.org

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