



***April 2016's
League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area's
Study Pages for Preschool Promise***

The proposed Preschool Promise (PSP) is picking up steam locally. To provide background to our members, the League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area's Education Committee has written the following information for your April Unit discussions after meeting with involved individuals, attending various meetings, and questioning the leaders of the movement, has written to provide background material.

Please note, the Education Committee provides information only—LWVCA has no position for or against the Preschool Project at this time. (See more about our positions, visit lwvcincinnati.org/positions.html)

Study after study has concluded that good quality early childhood education provides lasting benefits to all children as they move into elementary school. Unfortunately, however, many youngsters from low-income environments do not have the opportunity to attend any type of Preschool, let alone a quality facility. Specialized studies suggest that many challenges these particular children face as they enter elementary school could be alleviated if they, too, had access to good Preschools. The Preschool Promise program is designed to provide that access and ensure funding for it.

Throughout the past decades, several different types of well-known programs have operated locally to solve this problem. These include Head Start, funded by the federal government; Success By 6, sponsored by United Way; 4C for Children, an independent nonprofit organization; and Cincinnati Public Schools. Additionally, Preschools can be found in numerous churches, in private homes, and in licensed "school" facilities.

HEAD START

Head Start is a nation-wide federal program, which began as a summer offering in 1965. Its purpose was breaking the cycle of poverty by offering Preschoolers (ages 3 to 5) from low-income families preparation for future educational success. The Department of Health and Human Services now administers Head Start, which also includes physical, dental, nutritional and mental health services.

In our area, the Head Start program is administered by the Cincinnati/Hamilton County Community Action Agency and is the second oldest Head Start program in the nation. Locally, CAA offers three approaches: Head Start, which serves children ages 3-5 who aren't eligible for kindergarten; Early Head Start, a 12-month program that serves pregnant women and children under age 3; Home-Based Head Start, a 9-month program that provides in-home services to assist parents in the educational growth of their children.



Through its sub-contractors (Cincinnati Public Schools, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Union Bethel, YMCA, Every Child Succeeds, Community Action Agency) CAA serves 2,048 children in both all-day and half-day programs; this is approximately 40% of our area's children in families living below the poverty level.

Head Start and Early Head Start are funded 100% by federal government grants; child care vouchers are available to add additional hours in some programs.

4C FOR CHILDREN

This nonprofit organization does not deal directly with the children, but it does provide programs for parents as well as training and technical assistance for early childhood caregivers and teachers. It works with families, child-care centers, family child-care providers and employers in 40 counties in Ohio and Kentucky

4C trains, coaches and assists child-care providers. 4C advocates on behalf of children and families and maintains database of over 3,500 child-care options and early education opportunities. 4C works with parents to help them find quality care for their youngsters. The organization also works with employers and their employees to solve child-care problems.

4C is responsible for monitoring Step Up to Quality (SUTQ), a rating and improvement system for early learning and development programs. Schools and facilities "can earn a one-, two-, three-, four- or five-star rating by meeting Ohio's quality program standards." SUTQ was created by an office of the OH Dept. of Job and Family Services Bureau and a division of the OH Dept. of Education. The 1-to-5-star designation is awarded to Preschools based on numerous standards including highly trained teachers, teacher-child ratio, the development of school readiness skills, commitment to continuous improvement, developmentally appropriate curriculum and focus on family engagement. Progression to the various star levels can be time-consuming, detailed, and fairly expensive.

SUCCESS BY 6

Cincinnati is one of 350 cities in the U.S. where the United Way's Success By 6 strategy is operating. The program focuses on improving school readiness through local community change; its goal is to have young children ready to succeed when they enter school.

Home Visitation is one of the ways in which Success By 6 provides information to new parents, parents of young children, parents in remote areas, and parents with limited access to transportation. Home visitors help parents become more nurturing and competent in their roles. In Hamilton County, SUCCESS BY 6 coordinates home visitation by Every Child Succeeds, Help Me Grow, and the YWCA's HIPPIY program. These programs monitor the health care, parenting, and learning experiences for young children and additionally connect parents with other resources when needed.

SUCCESS BY 6 also works with parents to assist them in the selection of a quality Preschool for their youngsters, regardless of the family's resources. As there are 210 full-time child care centers and 165 part-time programs in Hamilton County, parents often need guidance to find



the program that will meet the needs of the child and the family. SUCCESS BY 6 can help direct parents to the resources they need.

CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CPS currently operates Preschool programs in 80 classrooms contained in 37 buildings; one adult is assigned for every 10 children. The district plans to expand the number of Preschool seats in some areas where the demand is high. Moreover, CPS is refurbishing Vine Street Elementary School, now closed, and will re-open it as a Preschool with 10 additional classrooms (200 seats).

CPS serves both 3- and 4-year-old children in its Preschool programs, which last year offered Head Start, Early Childhood Expansion, Special Education, and Montessori, to 1,129 children.

PRESCHOOL PROMISE (PSP)

In spite of the efforts of Head Start and the other supporting agencies, not all low-income Preschoolers in our area have an opportunity to attend a quality school. Indeed, estimates indicate that roughly 7,000 children lack this important opportunity because of their families' economic status and the lack of facilities to fill the need. Proponents of expanding quality Preschool for low-income youngsters offer the following rationale:

- The human brain undergoes its most significant development in the first five years of life, and a quality Preschool provides vital positive stimulation;
- Studies show that children who attend quality Preschools perform much better later in their elementary schools and tend not to drop out from high school;
- The region would benefit economically, as these students would then finish school and have the skills and capabilities to fill employment needs with local business and industry;
- More parents could enter the job market if their Preschool children were productively occupied during the day.

Two years ago, community and business leaders began working together to develop a program that might provide the means to offer quality Preschool to every low-income child in our area. A group traveled to Denver to examine its program, which is a tax-supported Preschool system of tuition credits that allow 4-year-olds to access quality Preschools and expand the quantity of such facilities in Denver.

Locally, a large, diverse Steering Committee was empaneled, which obtained support for the idea from a broad group of community agencies, foundations, and churches. Myers Research & Strategic Services conducted a poll of 650 likely voters from Hamilton County in December 2015; it showed that 57% of those interviewed found Preschool "very important." The concept has been met with approval by numerous communities and groups in local town hall meetings.

While not every "i" has been dotted and every "t" crossed at this time, PSP plans to go to the voters for financial support in November 2016. If voters approve the issue, PSP hopes to begin enrollment in the fall of 2017.



How It Would Work

PSP would make two years of quality Preschool available for all children ages three and four living within a region yet to be determined. It would provide tuition credits to eligible families who select quality-rated schools with a contract with PSP. Those tuition credits would be based on family income and the quality rating of the school selected. PSP will offer larger credits to parents who choose higher quality programs, again on a sliding scale.

Parents may choose from public or private, full or part day, full-time or nine-month schools. PSP will pay the credits directly to the Preschool program to offset costs for families.

Parents must submit an application for PSP, have their income verified to determine the amount of the tuition credit, and begin the enrollment process with the selected school. The school would submit monthly attendance records to PSP for each child, which would reimburse it according to the families' incomes.

PSP would require parents to have their enrolled student regularly attend the school selected. They would provide information about their student and allow the school to share that information with the PSP. An independent entity would monitor student progress and publicly report aggregated data each year.

Backers of Preschool Promise argue that in addition to making good Preschool available for youngsters from low-income circumstances, the system will have a very positive economic impact on the region.

What is "Quality"?

The issue of quality is basic to the PSP system. In order to qualify for subsidies, families must opt for a "quality" school, and the amount of the subsidy available will depend on how high that "quality" is in the selected school. Quality does not indicate what kind of school is operating—schools may be private, public, in-home, etc.; a rating system and evaluation determine quality.

Quality is calculated using the rating system, "Step Up To Quality" (SUTQ), the 5-Star Rating system used to evaluate early learning and development programs. (See description above in material on 4C.)

At this time, the PSP steering committee has not decided the minimum star-level school a parent must choose to qualify for a subsidy. Schools that choose to participate in PSP must have a star quality rating; when the supply of schools is sufficient, PSP will require programs to have earned a minimum level of stars to participate (2 or 3), but that minimum level is still under discussion.

Governance

Since some type of tax will presumably be supporting PSP, Leaguers need to know about the organization and its governance. Unfortunately, as this is being written (mid-February), details



of the structure are somewhat hazy. A report from Rand, a consulting group, is due in late February—too late for inclusion in these pages—should add more specifics.

PSP will be established as a 501c3 organization to manage taxpayer dollars and the implementation of its program. As citizens, we must insist on transparency and accountability in the organization's operations so that we can determine whether PSP is using public dollars as promised and if the results warrant further support.

According to material provided by Greg Landsman, Strategic Advisor to PSP, there will be a Board of Directors of 11 to 15 members probably comprised 1/3 of parents and caregivers, and 2/3 of providers, educators, community leaders, and elected officials.

If the funding measure is a city-only ballot measure, the Mayor of Cincinnati will appoint Board members, but a City Council super majority must recommend them. They will serve staggered four-year terms. The Board's responsibilities will include:

- Determining tuition credit structure and resource allocation;
- Informing parent recruitment and outreach strategy;
- Overseeing enrollment;
- Receiving and overseeing financial and operational data;
- Adjusting quality requirements if necessary;
- Making decisions and adjustments to parent expectations as a condition of accepting tuition credits if necessary;
- Community advocacy.

There will be a Chief Executive Officer and staff, and there will be contractors that will manage enrollment, processing, income verification, quality support and coaching. The contractors will report to the CEO, who will in turn report to the Board of Directors. Roles of the CEO and staff include:

- Developing and managing provider agreements;
- Managing contracts with enrollment/processing entity;
- Managing contracts with evaluator;
- Implementing Continuous Quality Improvement projects and/or manage contract with Continuous Quality Improvement experts ;
- Parent outreach and enrollment;
- Reporting tuition credit amounts to parents;
- Reporting progress to public;
- Providing staff support to the Board on key decisions.

Town Hall meetings and other sessions for public input have insisted on certain requirements: transparency and accountability; regular independent audits should be conducted; the board is diverse racially and economically; a nominating committee of community leaders and key stakeholders to help make recommendations to the council and the mayor.



The material presented here is subject to change in the future, as many questions being posed by citizens are not yet answered. The governance segment is still a work in progress and many of the approaches described above may change in the next few weeks or months.

Funding

Right now, the only fact known about the funding of PSP is that there probably be a tax request of some sort on the November ballot. Polling sponsored by the PSP implies that the request will be limited to Cincinnati residents (there is question as to whether or not all resident of the Cincinnati School District would be included, as there are sections outside the City that are included in the school district boundaries.) However, the polling covered 650 likely November 2016 voters in all of Hamilton County, and an oversample of 150 Cincinnati voters was weighted into the base.

A poll conducted by Myers Research & Strategic Services in December, 2015 confirmed that Hamilton County voters strongly agree that Preschool is important and that every child should have access to two years of affordable, quality Preschool. But a preferred funding mechanism is not as clearly supported.

The table below shows what the polling revealed about preferences for funding the initiative:

<u>Funding Option</u>	<u>Amount of Tax</u>	<u>Favorability</u>
PSP City Earnings Tax	+0.10%	62%
PSP City Earnings Tax	+0.15%	65%
<u>Funding Option</u>	<u>Amount of Tax</u>	<u>Favorability</u>
PSP County Sales Tax	+0.25%	51%
PSP Property Tax	3 mills	44%
Combined CPS/PSP Property tax-Public PreK only	8 Mills	35%
Combined CPS/PSP Property tax-Public & Private PreK	8 mills	39%

Like the section on Governance, the method of funding CPP is still being researched and discussed. More information will be forthcoming, but probably not until after our press date of the first week in March.

Rand Report

In preparation for a campaign to enlist public support for expanded access to Preschool, funded by a tax mechanism and available to all children in Cincinnati or Hamilton County, the Cincinnati Preschool Review Committee commissioned a study by the RAND Corporation. The Committee asked Rand to examine the community’s need for high quality early learning opportunities, the supply of spaces available in high-quality early learning programs, and the possibility of expanding those programs. The study was also to look at funding options, both private and public to fund such a program, and finally, to examine options for expanding access to quality Preschool programs. The study was begun in September, 2015 and may be released at the end of February, 2016. RAND will publish two reports and release its findings on www.rand.org.



More Information

The following websites offer information on Preschool Promise and the other organizations that are engaged with Preschool students and their families:

- **www.askPreschoolpromise.org** A place to send questions about the program and how it will function
- **www.cincinnatiheadstart.org** Information about local Head Start programs administered by the Hamilton County Community Action Agency
- **www.sb6uwgc.org** Success by 6's operations with and for children and families
- **www.4cforchildren.org** 4C for Children - How the program works with families and monitors Preschool quality