

GREAT PHILLY SCHOOLS

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GREATPHILLYSCHOOLS LAUNCHES NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION SITE

Philadelphia families can now find and compare high-quality early childhood education options

PHILADELPHIA, PA – Early childhood education advocates today joined nonprofit partners, city agencies and Superintendent William Hite to launch a new, free resource for Philadelphia families to learn about and compare the city’s top early childhood education options. City leaders officially launched the new website – GreatPhillySchools Early Childhood Education (ECE) – this morning at Families First, a high-quality early childhood center in West Philadelphia. The site is an extension of the existing GreatPhillySchools K-12 resource, which more than 100,000 families have used to get information about all the public and private schools in the city.

The GreatPhillySchools ECE website provides details – including location, accreditations, cost and more – for about 300 quality early childhood programs serving children ages 0 to 5 in the city. The site was developed to address the needs of Philadelphia families to have better information to help them find a high-quality child care or preschool program. Prior to today, parents seeking information on early childhood options had to rely on word-of-mouth or search multiple websites to get needed information to make decisions. There was no easy way to get reliable information about the quality of early childhood options. Of the more than 2,000 early childhood education providers in the city, only about 15 percent have met the quality benchmarks required to be included in the GreatPhillySchools resource.

“To ensure every child can be successful in school, it is critical for families to have access to the best possible early learning opportunities,” said Superintendent William Hite. “Our goal is for every child to be reading on grade level by 4th grade, and we all have to begin working toward that goal well before students get to kindergarten. We encourage families to take advantage of this resource to find quality early childhood education for their children, and support citywide efforts to give every child in Philadelphia access to high-quality pre-K.”

Studies have clearly demonstrated that high-quality early childhood education significantly reduces the achievement gap and increases the likelihood of high school graduation and college enrollment, so the School District of Philadelphia and the city's Office of Economic Opportunity have made early learning a major priority. A statewide campaign, Pre-K for PA, is working to make universally accessible, high-quality pre-K education a major focus of the 2014 gubernatorial campaign.

“There is a growing chorus of parents and advocates who are demanding high-quality early childhood education options for their children, and GreatPhillySchools offers a practical tool to help address this need,” said Sharon Easterling, Executive Director of DVAEYC. “The GreatPhillySchools Early Childhood Education website will provide access to actionable information, allowing parents make an informed decision about their child’s education. It also shows that Philadelphia does not have nearly enough high-quality pre-K options for all our children.”

The GreatPhillySchools ECE site was created through the collaboration of several nonprofit organizations and city agencies, including Child Care Information Services (CCIS), Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity, Pennsylvania's Promise for Children, the Philadelphia School Partnership, the School District of Philadelphia, Southeast Regional Key, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

The GreatPhillySchools resource offers searchable listings of early childhood education providers in Philadelphia. Families can search for specific programs by name, proximity to home address and zip code, or by neighborhood. The site lists only quality early childhood options; the 300 providers listed within must meet at least one of the following requirements:

- **Keystone STAR 3 or 4 quality rating** through the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
- **Accreditation** from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools (PAIS), or Middle States
- **Operate a Head Start, Bright Futures or Pre-K Counts** program

The site also provides additional resources to help parents understand and navigate early childhood education options, including a glossary of terms and acronyms frequently used by providers and policymakers. Families can find information on financial aid, how to calculate eligibility and how to compare different types of programs. Additionally, parents can get tips about what to look for when visiting an ECE center and subscribe to receive updates through e-mail or text notifications. The site is set up for both computer and mobile browsing.

About GreatPhillySchools

GreatPhillySchools is a citywide resource for Philadelphia families to learn about all the city's K-12 schools and quality early childhood education options. Its mission is to empower parents, caregivers and students with information to find, choose and demand great schools. It is presented through the collaboration of several nonprofit partners led by the Philadelphia School Partnership. The website, GreatPhillySchools.org, includes information and ratings on nearly every K-12 school in Philadelphia, including District, charter, Catholic and private schools, as well as more than 300 early childhood education centers. It is designed for families to search and compare education options in neighborhoods across the city of Philadelphia.

About DVAEYC

About Keystone Stars

Additional Resources: