

**EARLY LEARNING
MULTNOMAH**

Annual Report 2023-2024



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MULTNOMAH**



**United Way of the
Columbia-Willamette**

What's Ahead in 2024-2025

We have a wonderful problem in Multnomah County. There is a steadily growing array of options for families seeking free and reduced cost preschool, and the types of choices can be overwhelming.

We are very proud to share an innovative solution. Early Learning Multnomah and our partners across Multnomah County developed the Preschool Marketplace website. Building on an idea sparked by parent leaders, we created an easily navigated search engine that helps families find the free and low-cost preschool option that is right for them.

As the state-funded early learning hub for Multnomah County, we are charged with building an early learning system that gives families what they need to prepare their children for school success. Preschool Marketplace is one of Early Learning Multnomah's key strategic investments and a clever solution for a wonderful problem.

Take a look and see for yourself.

Molly and Frances
Co-Directors, Early Learning Multnomah County



Preschool Marketplace



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Ready for PreK Partnership

2023-2024 Annual Report

Preschool Matters

Young children thrive in learning environments that encourage their innate creativity and playfulness. They deserve to belong within a learning community of their peers led by educators who truly understand their unique needs and development. The earliest years of life are crucial for brain development and social-emotional development. Research shows wide-ranging individual and collective benefits to preschool attendance, such as higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance. And preschool matters because it is such a good fit for what young children need to thrive—time to play and learn in the company of other children with teachers who understand how three- and four-year-olds think and grow.

Programs in Multnomah

With considerable investment from federal, state, and local funding sources, Multnomah County has a robust and expanding network of publicly funded preschool programs with combined estimated 4,100 publicly funded slots for an estimated 16,000 preschool aged (2023). This network builds resiliency in our community by offering free and reduced-cost preschool to families.

The Need

Because each program has different eligibility criteria, service areas, and application processes, it can be confusing for families to know which program is a fit for them. This confusion can be yet another barrier for families accessing quality preschool. The Ready for PreK Partnership and Preschool Marketplace address this need by making it easier for families to find a preschool that's a good fit for them.

Our Approach

The Ready for PreK Partnership brings publicly funded preschool programs, early learning policy makers, referral organizations, and stakeholders together in collaboration to:

1. Support partners: Provide mutual support and enhance capacity of partner programs.
2. Support families: Expand access by simplifying the process of finding and enrolling in preschool.



Our Work: Partnership



"Historically we have all worked in silos when it comes to recruiting and enrolling families; this causes confusion for families and a sense of competitiveness amongst our programs."

-- Rhiannon Martin, PPS Early Learners

Each program shares a common goal of serving Multnomah County families through access to preschool. When we work together, we expand our reach and strengthen our community by making preschool more accessible. If we hope to raise children who value collaboration, then we must embody collaboration in the systems we design. Our Ready for PreK Partnership exemplifies this collaboration by creating a coalition of dedicated professionals who work throughout our community to ensure families can get the best for their children.

In partnership we:

- Build the trust necessary to establish a cohesive recruitment structure and streamlined referral process.
- Nurture a meeting place for group problem solving and navigating systemic challenges together.
- Lead the paradigm shift from competition to collaboration; creating a network that is stronger together than apart.

"The meetings are very helpful to hear from and build relationships with other Early Childhood Education programs in the area...I feel there has been progress towards building trust amongst programs."

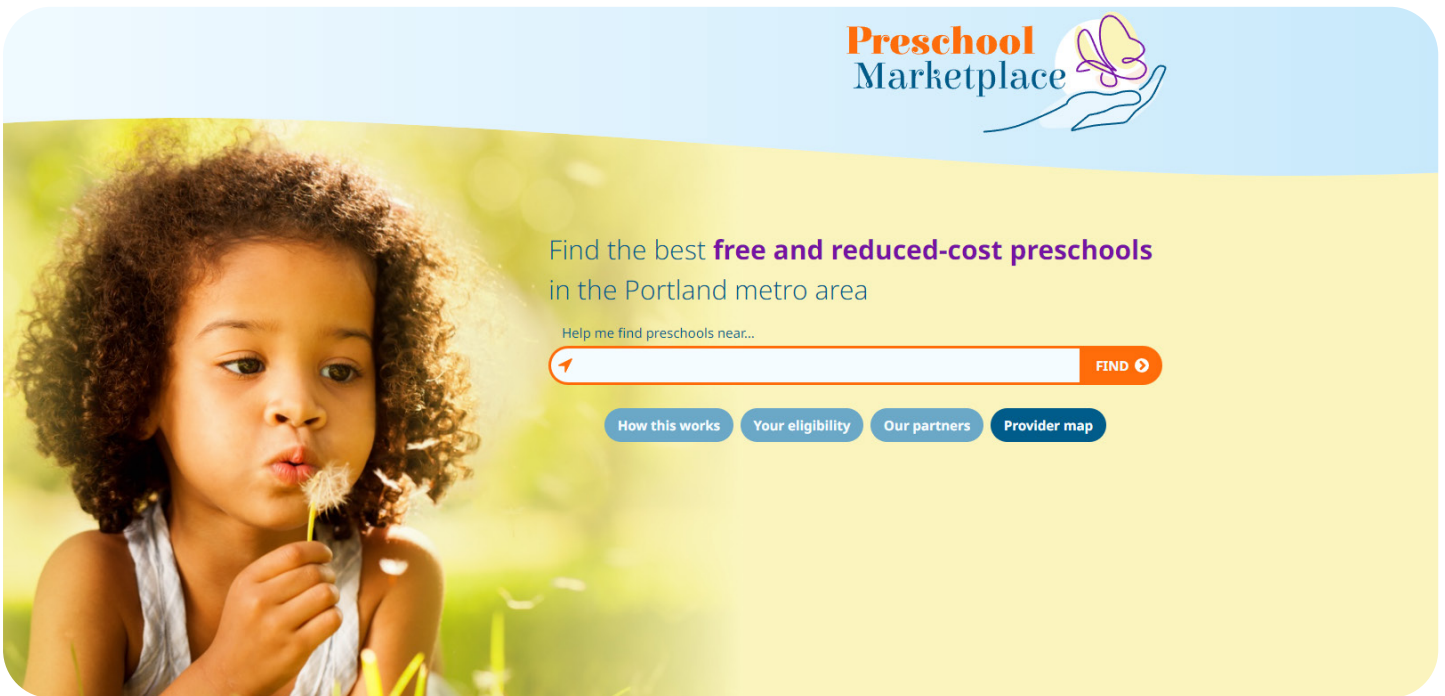
--Rhiannon Martin, PPS Early Learners

Our Work: Preschool Marketplace

Preschool Marketplace is a newly launched website that gathers information from publicly-funded preschool providers in Multnomah County. It is a place where families can find high-quality free and reduced-cost preschool in the Portland Metro area, using a simple and intuitive map of providers.

At PreschoolMarketplace.org, parents and caregivers can search for free and reduced-cost preschools by typing in their work, school, or home address. This ensures families can access quality preschool that works with their schedules, helping them better participate in the preschool experience and be more engaged with their children's education.

Preschool Marketplace supports partner programs by driving traffic to their providers and supports families by simplifying the process of finding preschool.



Here's how it works:

1. **Search** on the interactive map.
2. **Select** a provider to learn about their hours, teaching approach, and languages supported.
3. **Contact** the program to connect to a family navigator and/or apply.

"Parents have let us know how confusing it is to find a preschool and that they have to do a lot of searching. This new website makes it easier to search all the programs by what's closest to a family's home or work, and we're super grateful to our partners for stepping up to make it happen."

--Molly Day, Early Learning Director, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette

Our Work: Recruitment and Outreach

Recruitment Event at OMSI

During the 2023 spring application period, the Ready for PreK Partnership held a recruitment event at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) where we brought information and representatives from many preschool programs and wraparound services to a single venue. Families learned about preschool options while they made memories and enjoyed the museum. We also held a recruitment event at OMSI to promote spring 2024 enrollment.



Community Events

In 2023, our team conducted outreach at 10 community fairs and resource events. When we attend an event as Ready for PreK, we attend on behalf of the entire partnership, providing partner information, flyers, and referrals. We attended Good in the Hood, Juneteenth celebrations, the Salvation Army Back-to-School event, Mt. Hood Community College's Wellness Fair, Rock the Block, and several movie nights in Gresham.



"During the intake session with a family, a mother expressed her enthusiasm upon learning about Neighborhood House through the Mt. Hood event organized by Preschool Marketplace. She had been actively searching for a preschool on the West side of Portland and obtained relevant information during the Mt. Hood event."

-- Hung Le, Neighborhood House

Community Canvassing

In 2023, our team distributed 50 multilingual posters and 300 postcards to community centers, pediatric clinics, libraries, and more.

Preschool Marketplace

Still in its first year, the Preschool Marketplace website continues to grow in scope and reach.



Who we are: Early Learning Multnomah County



Early Learning Multnomah (ELM) operates as one of 16 regional early learning hubs operating throughout Oregon. As part of the inaugural cohort of hubs established in the summer of 2014, ELM collaborates closely with the Department of Early Learning and Care, leveraging their resources and expertise to advance our collective mission of equitable early childhood development and education.

We firmly believe that every child possesses the potential for success in school. However, regrettably, race, ethnicity, and language too often serve as indicators of poverty and low rates of academic achievement. This discrepancy arises from the inadequacies within our current system of social services, educational institutions, and community support networks, which fail to effectively cater to the needs of children and families of color. Our mission is to change this narrative.

Our dedicated efforts are directed towards ensuring that children of color aged six and under receive the necessary support to thrive academically, both in kindergarten and beyond. We concentrate on this demographic because we recognize their disproportionate representation in impoverished circumstances. Despite comprising 45% of all children aged six and under in our county, children of color constitute 67% of those living in poverty.

We are committed to dismantling the structural barriers that impede families of color from providing optimal growth and learning environments for their young children. Through forging strategic partnerships, aligning with family-driven priorities, challenging conventional paradigms, and empowering our collaborators, we endeavor to enhance the efficacy of services delivered to children and families of color in Multnomah County.

Our team consists of six amazing individuals: Annie Mellan, Frances Sallah, Lai-Lani Ovalles, Michelle Nelson, Mina Smith and Molly Day. Along with countless volunteers, our team is committed to the work ELM is doing in the community and with Preschool Marketplace.

Meet the Partners

Albina Head Start & Early Head Start promotes school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by supporting the development of the whole child. All services are provided FREE to families.



Mt. Hood Community College Head Start & Early Head Start serves low-income families with young children who live in East Multnomah County. Special programs are available for working parents and parents who are students at Mt. Hood Community College.

Multnomah Early Childhood Program offers imaginative and lively classes and young children make friends while playing, painting, learning and laughing alongside children with special needs. Peers learn diversity, tolerance, and to appreciate the differences in every child. Our professional teaching teams include state licensed, early childhood special education teachers.



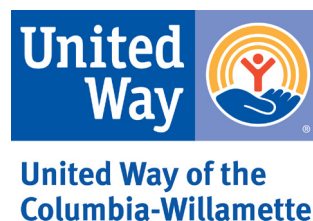
Neighborhood House's early childhood education programs provide an opportunity for preschoolers to learn, grow, and thrive in environments that emphasize parents as primary teachers and child-led learning.

Portland Public Schools Early Learners: PPS Pre-Kindergarten is a free preschool program that promotes the school readiness of children ages 3 - 5 by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.



Preschool for All connects 3- and 4-year-olds in Multnomah County to free, culturally responsive, inclusive preschool experiences. This new program will grow over time, increasing the number of children and families that it serves each year.

Preschool Promise is Oregon's innovative free preschool program. It is open to families with children who are 3 or 4 years old and whose income is at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level or below. Parents can choose from school-based or home-based programs.



What's Ahead in 2024-2025

Beginning in early March, applications for the 2024-2025 school year will be accepted by many partner programs. However, some programs still have available slots for the current school year. Visit www.preschoolmarketplace.org to find a preschool near you.

Benefits to Partners:

- Conduct shared outreach and recruitment at spring, summer, and fall resource events.
- Drive traffic to the Preschool Marketplace website so parents have an easier time finding available preschool slots.
- Build our referral network so if a family is ineligible for one program, they can be referred to one for which they are eligible.
- Support one another through the application season and hold space for group problem solving of shared challenges that may arise in the early learning ecosystem.

Benefits to Families:

- Distributing information on available free and reduced-cost preschool
- Enhancing the Preschool Marketplace website to allow parents to search by eligibility and streamline the application process.
- Bringing together preschool programs and families for a memorable night at OMSI in March.



