

Universal Pre-K Transformational Project Proposal

Proposal: It is my recommendation that with the restored momentum of Universal Pre-K in our community, we reinforce our commitment to support this initiative through advocacy and financial support of Hope Toledo.

HOPE Toledo is a 501(c) 3 organization whose mission is to support and ensure high-quality education—from preschool to postsecondary and trade school—for every young person in the city of Toledo, in order to create generational economic change for the betterment of our families and community.

The organization was established to help children obtain high-quality early childhood education through HOPE Toledo Pre-K and postsecondary training in college or trade schools through HOPE Toledo Promise.

In conjunction with Toledo Public Schools, Washington Local Schools, early childhood education providers, and many other educators and service organizations in our community, HOPE Toledo Pre-K will help improve school readiness outcomes and subsequent school performance. Simply put, more of our children will enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Background

- In 2019, The city of Toledo began to take steps toward an opportunity for students in our region to receive universal access to pre-kindergarten education. The effort was placed on a city of Toledo levy ballot.
 - The profound need for such an action was based on the data below:
 - 65% of kindergarteners enter Toledo Public Schools testing developmentally behind on the Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
 - Many never catch up, and the K-12 system must invest expensive resources in intervention, rather than education.
 - High quality early childhood education programs have been shown to impact kindergarten readiness, elementary school reading levels and overall life outcomes.
 - In Toledo, access to high quality early childhood education does not meet the existing need.
- Toledo Rotary was asked by Toledo Community Foundation to support the research phase of the project. After much discussion, the Youth Services Committee agreed that we would support the community in its effort to launch this opportunity and donated \$10,000 to validate our commitment as a valued community partner.
- The levy did not pass, and then the COVID-19 pandemic which significantly slowed momentum in this area.
- However, Hope Toledo began to take on the work of educating our pre-kindergarten students.

Where things currently stand:

- Research shows that from birth to age 5 is the most important time for a child's emotional, behavioral, social, and cognitive development.
- According to HOPE Toledo leaders, the majority of Toledo's children enter kindergarten without the skills, behaviors, or knowledge necessary for success and the organization is working to change that.
- Toledo's future depends on a well-educated workforce, yet four out of five children here – which is 80% – start school unprepared to learn. Too many stay behind – in reading, math, high school

graduation, college enrollment, job skills and family income. Our 4,000 4-year-olds need a strong start so Toledo can have a stronger economy and future.

HOPE Toledo Pre-K is working for sustainable public preschool funding to:

1. Get all 4-year-olds access to high-quality preschool through public schools and community providers.
2. Provide families with tuition assistance on a sliding scale based on income.
3. Require high standards, sound curricula, small classes, and family engagement.
4. Attract and retain excellent teachers with competitive compensation.
5. Provide professional development to improve teacher and student performance.
6. Partner with local agencies for the health, social, and behavioral services children need.
7. Guarantee accountability with program evaluations and financial audits.

Governance is shared by participating school districts and a HOPE Toledo Pre-K Services Board including the districts, city, educators, parents, agency partners, funders, and local citizens – and implemented by a small pre-K leadership team.

On May 2, Hope Toledo announced today it plans to add 14 new HOPE Toledo Pre-K Affiliate Providers, potentially more than doubling its provider network. In addition, on May 31, the Toledo City Council also committed \$1 million dollars to continue Hope Toledo's efforts. Currently, there are ten HOPE Toledo Pre-K Partner Providers from the inaugural 2021-2022 demonstration year.

To be named a HOPE Toledo Pre-K Partner Provider, each went through a rigorous vetting process and demonstrated their practices align with HOPE Toledo's core components and are ready to implement the specified standards and requirements developed by HOPE Toledo Pre-K. In turn, they receive HOPE Toledo funding to support full implementation.

The purpose of the HOPE Toledo Affiliate Provider relationships is three-fold:

1. To continue to build HOPE Toledo's focus on creating a comprehensive, community-based approach to early childhood education and care in our community.
2. To align with preschool providers who want to be a part of HOPE Toledo, but for one reason or another did not or were not able to participate in the initial 2021-2022 demonstration year.
3. To give preschool providers time to respond to the full HOPE Toledo Pre-K standards to be ready for the 2022-2023 year and become a HOPE Toledo Pre-K Partner Provider.
4. By expanding the network of pre-K providers, more children will have access to high-quality pre-K, helping to ensure they are ready for kindergarten and poised for ongoing academic success.

Expanding affordable access to high-quality preschool will:

- Level the playing field, giving all of Toledo's children a chance to succeed.
- Help local parents return to work and restart our economy.
- Improve access to needed health, nutrition, and mental health services.
- Position Toledo to compete with other major Ohio cities.