

From: [Brown, Kerry](#)
To: ["Megan McNally"](#)
Subject: Highland Park 12/2/25 DOE Preschool Visit
Date: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 1:23:00 PM

Good morning,

It was a pleasure visiting Highland Park on Monday 12/2 and being able to see the preschool program! Thank you for your willingness to showcase your preschool program and receive feedback to ensure students are receiving a high quality preschool education. Below are notes I collected to summarize our meeting:

Strengths/Notes

Universe/Collaboration

- The site visit included 6 PEA in-district classrooms.
- All sites all having positive learning environments and teacher/child interactions.
- Paraprofessionals were actively engaged.
- The district uses mixed age groups to ensure the maximum amount of general education students can be served.
- The district currently has a waitlist of almost 40 students.
- Head Start is not willing to contract with the district/Private Providers either do not meet facilities requirements and/or are unresponsive.

Classroom Environment

- All classrooms were child-friendly and it was clear students are active participants in their classroom environment.
- All classrooms showed a vast amount of theme evidence.
- Positive teacher and child interactions were displayed.
- The following environmental displays and supports were included in *two* classrooms but should be improved overall:
 - Student Centered Work; 3D art
 - Vast amount of learning materials
 - Strong visuals and props in each learning center to engage and redirect student play
 - A variety of child made props and displays
 - Some evidence of Pyramid Model (i.e. materials and strategies for students)

Curriculum/Assessment

- Curriculum is being implemented to fidelity through the learning activities and materials.
- Assessment consist of the Dynamic Assessment and TOM is piloting the SEED Assessment program which consist of the comprehensive assessment of the TOM preschool day.

Coaching/Professional Development

- Structured observation tools are being used.
- PIC/PIRS coaching consist of modeling, teacher classroom visits, videos, focusing on PDP's.
- PIC shared that coaching data show teacher strengths of cohesive collaboration and the willingness to share ideas.
- PIC shared that coaching goals include focusing on literacy instruction.
- PIRS shared that coaching goals consist of increasing strategies for teacher de-escalation and managing behaviors through Tier 1 Interventions.

- The district plans to incorporate paraprofessional PLC's
- Tools of the Mind conducts PLC's and workshops for staff and paraprofessionals year round.

Family Outreach/Transition

- CPIS/the district has done great work with workshops and outreach that support student academic achievement, social and emotional development, health and wellness, and family engagement.
- Childcare and meals are provided for parents to be able to engage in the activities and increase attendance.
- ECAC goals consist of reflecting on family engagement and increasing turnout; community needs assessment was distributed.
- The Transition Team has a strong relationship with Early Intervention and has activities in place for PK to K transition.

MLL Supports

- The district makes a strong effort to hire diverse staff which is evident in most classrooms.
- Several classes have materials that reflect student cultures and experiences.

Professional Development

- All admin have early childhood background and experience.
- Planned staff PD consist on site TOM Training, PLC's, and staff meetings.

Other PEA Requirements

- All Health Screenings are being conducted (Height/Weight/Vision/Hearing/Dental) and the nurse plans and participates in the different workshops related to health and wellness.
- District is enrolled in GNJK.
- The district will need to hire a social worker as per [6A:13A-4.6\(b\)1](#) Family and community involvement

Areas of Recommendation

- Learning Environment: Purchase center materials such as dramatic play clothing, food, props, and books. Consider asking families for donations.
- Learning Environment: While the district has purchased equitable instructional materials, staff should be ensuring they are all being put to use and accessible to students.
- Learning Environment: Share with your staff the ECERS manual to ensure they understand the importance of room arrangement.
- Learning Environment: Share with staff the importance of not only the placement of a cozy corner but the importance of books, visuals, and sensory materials.
- Learning Environment: Ensure all staff understand the importance of process vs. product work as well as the importance of labeling student art work.
- Learning Environment: Incorporate displaying guiding questions in learning centers to ensure staff are intentional during play.
- Learning Environment: Increase evidence of Pyramid Model (i.e. materials, visuals, and strategies for students); these Tier 1 interventions are imperative
- Curriculum: Focus on PD and coaching support that improves teacher and paraprofessional differentiation of scaffolding during play planning. During play planning, consider student wait times (i.e. writing their name while they wait; leaving once they finish their play plans and review with their teacher)
- Curriculum: While fidelity is key, best practice will ensure that learning gaps are met;

consider ways to enhance the current TOM learning activities through differentiation and creativity.

- Professional Development: Consider teacher-led PLC's to boost their confidence and increase collaboration.
- Transitions: Ensure staff understand the importance of fingerplays and songs
- MLLS: Ensure MLL's receive ESI-3 screener in their home language; Continue to work to engage MLL students through the learning environment (i.e. have families send in cultural food props or clothing items, have families read stories in both English and their home language during parent reader visits)
- Student engagement/Field Trips: PEA funds all general education students so it is important that all students are included in any real world experiences.

Again, thank you for the tour and your willingness to receive feedback! I really enjoyed our dialogue regarding best practice for students after the tour. You have a wonderful team and your preschool program is off to a great start!

Sincerely,

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