

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-SUN

Clark and Champaign Counties' Hometown News

\$330K grant will expand Springfield preschool

Monday, Oct. 12, 2015 - By [Michael Cooper](#), Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield City School District has received a more than \$330,000 grant to expand its preschool program, which school leaders believe can improve academic performance and test scores. The state grant will add four classes at the Clark Center, allowing about 80 economically disadvantaged students to attend preschool.

"It will provide them with the foundation of education," Superintendent Bob Hill said. "They'll spend two years with us as 3- and 4-year-olds and enter kindergarten on equal footing, which they don't always have the opportunity to do."



Camryn Eanes works on his tower building skills as he plays with the blocks in his preschool class Monday. The Springfield City School District has received a more than \$330,000 grant to expand its preschool program. The money will allow more than 80 students to attend the program at the Clark Center. Bill Lackey/Staff

Gov. John Kasich signed House Bill 64 earlier this year, setting aside about \$15 million for early childhood education programs throughout the state. The program will allow an additional 3,600 disadvantaged children across Ohio to receive preschool classes this school year.

About \$10 million will be awarded in 2017, serving about 2,400 children.

Four Clark County preschool providers received more than \$700,000 in funding for more than 176 students. No entities in Champaign or Logan counties received a state award.

The three other Clark County preschools that received the grant money included:

- Miami Valley Child Development Centers, St. Joseph's, 819 Kenton St., \$160,000, 40 students.
- Springfield Christian School, 311 W. High St., \$160,000, 40 students.
- Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Medway, \$52,000, 13 students.

In May, Springfield schools added \$300,000 to its preschool budget to add three classrooms, bringing its total spending to about \$1.9 million and total preschool enrollment to about 345 students. The state money may replace what was spent earlier this year, Hill said, but it's still not clear how the money can be spent.

The goal is to offer all-day, everyday classes to all preschoolers in the district in the near future, Hill said. "It's so important, especially when you're dealing with poverty," Hill said.

By providing early childhood education, students will be more successful when they enter kindergarten, Hill said, which will lead to better performance and higher test scores.



Bryce Howard makes a rubbing of a log to see what the texture looks like Monday in his preschool class. The Springfield City School District has received a more than \$330,000 grant to expand its preschool program. The money will allow more than 80 students to attend the program at the Clark Center. Bill Lackey/Staff

The district was one of only a handful in Ohio to not meet any of the 24 indicators that measure the percentage of students who have passed state tests, although it did score an A on yearly progress.

Preschool students enter kindergarten having mastered certain skills, like the alphabet and colors, Hill said, that they may not have otherwise.

"If you don't have that foundation, that's where you get into third grade and you're behind," Hill said. Parents pay \$50 per month for preschool. The program also provides breakfast and lunch.

The grant is big news for both children and parents in Springfield, said Bob Welker, project director at the Springfield Promise Neighborhood.

"It's a game changer because children are with adults who can help them academically and socially get ready for kindergarten, but it's also a game changer for parents to have available for them on a consistent basis quality early childhood opportunities," Welker said.

Early childhood education has become a statewide focus, he said.

"The fact that Springfield is leading the way is a big deal," Welker said.

The preschool also provides early intervention for children who face certain social and physical issues, he said.

"Those are noticed earlier and can be addressed earlier in a way that's far more beneficial," Welker said.

The biggest problem is space at the Clark Center, Hill said. The district will need to find more ways to add classrooms, he said, including a possible expansion. Seven of the 10 elementary schools are also currently at capacity.

"We're busting at the seams," Hill said. "It's a good problem to have. It means people are coming back to the city schools and that's what we want."

The teachers do a great job with the children, said Kristi Taylor, whose son Brayden attends the Clark Center.

"He's learning so much," Taylor said. "It's a good opportunity for any parent."

By the numbers

\$330,000: Amount of money provided to expand the Springfield City School District preschool program for this school year.

\$1.9 million: Amount of money the district is spending on preschool this school year.

345: Number of preschool students at the Clark Center this school year.

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