



We're changing the equation

PCEF February 2020 Program Spotlight
Preschool | Early Childhood Education
Lower the Cost of Preschool. Raise the Odds of Success.

"I am always blown away when I walk into [the preschool] class at how every single child is on task and the room seems so calm and warm," says Park City School District Preschool parent Caitlin Bognaski. "My son comes home every day with new things he learned and fun new experiences he got to have in class."

If you follow Park City Education Foundation's work, you're likely a little a bit familiar with the research about how valuable investment in early childhood education is - both funding-wise and through the lens of academic success.

And while the research tells a great story, just a bit of exposure to the emotion that preschool elicits – from teachers, parents, and students – is enough to put a smile on anyone's face.

"We are the first experience that adults and their children have with school," says Parley's Park preschool teacher Kristen Robinson. "That's an important role. We are a safe place for these children - they just love us!"

And trust me - if you could hear Ms. Kris' voice - it would be so obvious that she just loves *them*! (**READ MORE** about preschool teacher Ms. Kristen Robinson in this month's Teacher Spotlight!)

And while research bears out that preschool is tremendously worthy based on finances alone – every single dollar we invest provides a \$13 dollar return – the primary objective of preschool is to prepare children for both academic and social-emotional success.

“We really do build the bridges of learning, and guide them to learn how to be school kids,” says Ms. Kris. “We start with things like three-step directions, pieces that set them up for success next year.”

Preschool is important because it builds children’s foundational pieces and attitudes they build their educational career on. Children are exposed to new experiences and ideas, and are then able to expand on them. Academic language and skills are explored and built, friendship, cooperation, collaboration, and confidence are practiced with the children each day.

Thanks to your generous support, PCEF is able to provide \$100,000 in preschool funding each year to Park City School District. This is a major reason affordable preschool is offered at all four of Park City’s elementary schools - which ensures more of Park City’s young learners start their educational journey off in the right direction.

“I love a preschool that is play-based but also with a good academic curriculum,” says parent Ms. Bognaski. “I love that the preschool is at Parley’s so that the students get comfortable with the school, teachers, and staff which makes the transition to kindergarten so much easier.”

The Park City School District Preschool Program started in 2011 with seed funding from PCEF donors. Four years ago, with the support of PCEF, a full day 4-year old preschool program was piloted at McPolin Elementary. Due to overwhelming demand and success, both McPolin and Parleys Park Elementary Schools now offer two full-day 4-year old preschool classes.

“There’s a lot of learning, a lot of play, and a lot of learning through play,” says Ms. Kris. “We use project-based learning - there are no set rules. The children have many options and materials – and are encouraged to make mistakes.”

No mistake, however, in investing in early childhood education. In fact, long-term studies are unequivocal. Attending preschool increases high school graduation rates, years of college completed, and lifetime earned income. Oh, and that \$13 figure mentioned earlier? Here are the details: every dollar invested into preschool provides a \$13 return – because when the achievement gap is addressed before kindergarten, it limits the need for expensive interventions in early elementary years.

Ms. Kris sees these specific benefits each year: “We can identify challenges right away and do an early intervention and catch it really quickly. Things like speech issues, even mental wellness support. We can start providing services and working on different tiers of behavior if need be.”

PCEF's early childhood education goal is to give every Park City student a leg up on academic success by making sure access to preschool is attainable. With access to more classroom space and funding, PCSD and PCEF can continue to partner to make this dream a reality.

"I've had my kids at 4 different preschools over the years (we moved a lot!) and this one is by far the best," says Ms. Bognaski. "From the community and warm feeling of the elementary school as a whole and how they include the preschool, to the fun and creative ways Ms. Kris teaches lessons, to the classroom management, and a million other little things, it is such a great place for young minds to learn and be loved!"

About Park City Education Foundation

Vision

To help launch well prepared, curiosity-driven, creatively inspired citizens of the world.

Mission

Lead the community in funding initiatives that inspire and challenge all Park City students to successfully reach their academic and life-long potential.

Why does PCEF exist?

- Park City is the wealthiest micropolitan area in the country - and our schools *still* don't have the money they need for programs that district families have come to depend on.
- Utah schools rank last in per-pupil funding... AND ...
- 96% of state-collected education tax dollars go to *other* school districts.
- Park City Education Foundation fills the gap in funding.

PCEF funds 8 key initiatives/programs:

1. Preschool
2. Afterschool
3. Elementary Visual Arts (EVA)
4. STEM
5. Park City Center for Advanced Professional Studies (PCCAPS)
6. Bright Futures
7. Classroom Grants
8. Idea Lab