

# Pre Boston

Family Newsletter - April 2021

Monthly News from Boston Universal Pre-K for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Parents and Families,

Spring is here with a renewed promise of hope. We hope that you are able to increase quality time spent with loved ones in fresh air and in nature (safely).

Highlights of this month's Boston UPK Family Newsletter include:

- Great news about the launch of the Early Childhood Family Council and its Steering Committee
- Additional funds awarded from Boston UPK to community-based organizations through the UPK Equity Fund to further support UPK children and families to mitigate factors preventing full participation
- Abby's Corner, as well as tips and recommendations from SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy) Corner and our community partner Vital Village/STRIVE, as well as other updates.

As always, contact me if you have any questions!

Joelle Auguste  
Boston UPK Family Engagement and  
Comprehensive Services Manager

## **Announcing Launch of the Family Council**

Boston UPK is excited to announce the creation of the Early Childhood Family Council! The inaugural Family Council held its first meeting on March 24 and selected its Steering Committee members.

The Family Council will serve to provide a space and process for families to inform early childhood curriculum, policies, procedures, and family services that are being considered for implementation by the Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood and the Boston Universal Pre-K Program.

The Council is currently comprised of family representatives from each community-based organization; 12 of the 18 representatives were present at the first meeting. The Council elected six representatives to serve on the Steering Committee. Thank you and congratulations to all representatives including the Steering Committee members: Ryan Murphy (Co-chair), Sarah Olia (Co-chair), Tashanna Williams (Vice-Chair), Edwin Menard (Treasurer), Linnette Speel (Secretary), and Adelfia Barros (Communication Liaison). The Family Council will meet again in May.

## **UPK Equity Fund Report**

Boston UPK is pleased to provide an update on the Equity Fund, which is a grant program launched during COVID-19. The Equity fund seeks to provide supplemental funds through grants to community-based organizations. These funds are to provide necessary support to help sites mitigate factors that prevent children and families from fully accessing the UPK curriculum and program.

We received five applications from four CBOs and awarded a total of \$45,710 in the recent round of funding. We are thankful to Boston UPK Advisory Committee members and BPS staff who served on the review committees to ensure equitability for UPK families and children.

## SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy Corner)

Jennifer Montrose, Speech and Language Pathologist

Cassandra Crichlow, Occupational Therapist

Each month, the UPK Related Services team is sharing activities that can be done to help with the development of language, eye-hand coordination skills, and self-regulation. Language skills refer to what the child can understand (receptive) as well as what they can say (expressive). Self-regulation is the ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. April will focus on **laundry**.

Kids are always eager to help around the home. They usually want to do what the grow-ups are doing. Thus having them help with the laundry can help you and them at the same time. Doing the laundry is a great way to provide your child vocabulary, language input, and the ability to practice following directions.

Try some of the following when doing laundry:

- Label things as you are doing them (ex: First, I put the clothes in the washer. Next, I put in the soap powder in the washer. Last, I close the door and press start).
- Think about adjectives to emphasize (ex: damp, dirty, clean, dark, wet, dry).
- Target different grammar such as plurals and possessive words (ex: socks, ties, Daddy's shirt, Larry's pants).
- Describe the patterns, differences and similarities of the clothes (ex: These socks have stripes but these socks have polka dots).
- Have them practice listening skills as you both put the laundry away (ex: Put this shirt on Marcus' bed).
- Give your child a ride in the laundry basket and work on requests for "more," "go," "fast," or "stop."

Laundry time can also give you opportunities to work on fine motor and sensory processing skills with your child:

- Sorting - Build visual discrimination skills by practicing putting clothing into different piles (ex: shirts, pants, underclothes, lights, darks).
- Matching - Build visual discrimination skills by practicing matching socks, colors, etc.
- Opening/Pouring - Build manipulation skills by having your child twist open detergent bottles and pour detergent, or by scooping/pouring powdered detergent.
- Coin use - Develop in-hand manipulation skills if you go to the laundromat, by having your child grab coins and feed the machines.
- Folding - Practice multi-step tasks and imitation skills by folding similar clothing side by side with your child.
- Carrying - Work on upper body strength and balance by having your child carry small piles to their dresser.
- Swinging! - Give your child a ride in the laundry basket and swing for vestibular input.

### It's Time To Do The Laundry

Think adjectives: wet, dry, clean, dark, damp, light, filthy!!

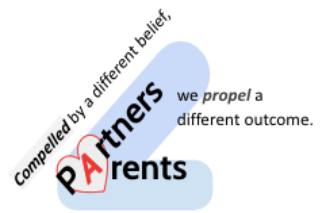
Target grammar with plural and possessive word endings: socks, Daddy's, etc.

Practice listening for critical elements as you and your child put the laundry away: "Put Evan's socks in his bottom drawer."

Describing patterns, differences and similarities of clothes.

Give your child laundry basket rides and work for requests for "more" or "go" or sing "Row-Row Your Boat" as you rock them side to side!





May 3-9 is Children's Book Week, a celebration of the power of literacy as a life-changer. We know that confident and capable young readers are most likely to have success in school and beyond. What can you do as a family to support the budding reader in your home and prepare them for entering Kindergarten in the fall?

**Reading is all around.** Research refers to "literacy-rich" homes as fundamental to children's school success. Does this mean reading 100 books with your child before starting school? While literacy activities are certainly grounded in reading, literacy opportunities go well beyond storybooks. One of the easiest ways to build children's literacy skills is to just notice with them all the places in their daily experience where they encounter print. When you're running errands with children, reading signs like SALE!, check-out, price, and even the names of stores supports children in noticing that letters make up words and that words make up meaning. This helps build decoding skills, letter-sound recognition, and reading for information.

**Tell me a story.** Not only is storytelling a great way to bond as a family through shared history, it is also a great way to engage in literacy skills. Start by having an older member of the family tell a story about a major family event - wedding, birthday, graduation, etc. Afterward, ask a younger member of the family to retell the story in his or her own words. Be supportive if they miss an important element and help the child pronounce key vocabulary words like names of relatives, locations, etc. This helps build vocabulary, understand sequencing and recall information.

**Write on!** Young children love to use their imaginations to create stories. One of the earliest literacy skills children develop is telling a story from start to finish in order. Encourage children to create their own picture books with simple materials such as a few pieces of paper stapled together into blank books, photos, pictures from magazines, or better yet, your child's own drawings. Give these books a special place in your home and ask children to "read" them to you. Don't worry if the words are spelled correctly, or if the work is "neat." The important thing is to give children a sense that they are readers, writers, artists, and storytellers.

**Finally,** as always, your relationship with your child is the biggest influence on your child as a learner. The above suggestions are all opportunities to have conversations with your child; ask questions that encourage them to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions; and bring you closer as a family through a love of books and stories.

Check out your local libraries for reading lists for your child on a variety of topics!

Abby Morales  
Program Director  
Boston Public Schools Early Childhood Department

## School Reopening Resources for Early Education and Back to School

As some are getting ready to go back to an in-person classroom in the near future after learning remotely for some time, STRIVE has compiled resources this month to related to early education and care reopening and back to school. [STRIVE \(Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators\)](#) is a collaborative project between Boston Medical Center's [Child Witness to Violence Project](#) and [Vital Village Networks](#) which is partnered with Boston Universal Pre-K.

### [Early Education and Care Reopening Resources](#)

By Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health (MassAIMH)

Highlight: Free children's social stories for going back to school (editable versions)

### [Covid-19 Resources for Early Childhood Educators](#)

By Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate

Highlight: Tip sheets available in multiple languages in topics such as: how to talk to children about what's new when they return, how to help children feel calm, building resilience, etc.

### [Facilitation Toolkit - Rhythm and Rhyme: Activities for Early Childhood Mental Health](#)

By Vital Village Mental Health Committee

Highlight: Songs, finger plays, story time tips, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) word bank, and other references for activities

### [Books about Attachment and Separation for Children](#)

By [Children's Mental Health Storytimes](#) - partnership of Vital Village Networks and Boston Public Library

Highlight: A list of children's books that help children explore feelings and talk about ways to stay connected to their caregivers even when apart

### [Back-to-School Resources for Families and Educators](#)

By Child Mind Institute

Highlight: Back-to-School Anxiety During COVID blog on helping kids manage fears and gain independence

## Tax Prep Assistance Available

[StreetCred](#) is a program affiliated with Boston Medical Center. StreetCred at BMC is offering a tax service fully virtually due to the pandemic. They offer tax filing completed by certified IRS tax preparers. Income limit \$56,000. The tax filing deadline has been extended; submit your documents by May 3.

[Boston Tax Help Coalition](#) is a program developed by the Mayor's Office of Financial Empowerment, with virtual and neighborhood tax preparation sites. The program offers free tax preparation and filing for Individuals who earned less than \$57,000 in 2020.




**GET YOUR FREE TAX PREPARATION FOR APRIL 2021**

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<http://www.streetcred.org>



Mayor Martin J. Walsh  
**BOSTON TAX HELP COALITION**