

Pre Boston

Family Newsletter - February 2021

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

Dear Parents and Families,

A new day is dawning: a day where we are thankful for a new year, a new vaccine, and the first Black, Asian, and female Vice President. We want to kickstart Black History Month by reminding everyone that Black history *is* American history; however, instead of focusing on the trauma this particular group has endured, we should instead focus on celebrating the resilience this community has demonstrated in the face of adversity. We should hold the words of youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman closely as we navigate unprecedented times: "For there is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it and if only we are brave enough to be it!"

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

- Boston UPK partner Families First offers tips about school readiness for parents to ensure a smooth transition to K2 for their children
- Family Council – Consider joining to advocate on behalf of your child, represent your program, and receive advocacy training
- Abby's Corner: A Reflection from Abby Morales, BPS Program Developer, on Black History Month and Amanda Gorman's impact at the Inauguration
- Wellness Wheel: An exercise from Boston UPK partner Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators (STRIVE)
- SPOT (Speech and Occupational Therapy Corner): Jennifer Montrose, Speech and Language Pathologist, and Cassandra Crichlow, Occupational Therapist for Boston UPK share an interactive activity on feelings

As always, contact me if you have any questions!

Joelle Auguste
Boston UPK Family Engagement and
Comprehensive Services Manager

Upcoming Workshops and Events for Parents and Caregivers

UPK Family Council Info Session Thursday, Feb. 4 6:15PM

Next info session (Spanish) on joining the Family Council. The council was created to amplify voices of parents by informing them of the early childhood curriculum, policies, procedures, and family services. Register at tinyurl.com/y2nekpyn to receive Zoom info.

Parenting While Black Series Begins Monday, Feb. 15 4PM

Hosted by Brazelton Touchpoints Center. Free webinar series through April; attend one or attend all. Feb. 15 topic: Let's Talk About It: How Are "We" Doing? Register at tinyurl.com/1xnnl94j

Intro to Special Education Workshop Saturday, March 6 10AM

BPS Special Education Related Services will present this workshop to parents and caregivers about the basics of special education, flow charts, child development, and the referral process.

Zoom: tinyurl.com/23oa669c

Meeting ID: 867 7371 9893, Passcode: 3s9UJ1

Families First Power of Parenting (POP) Series Next session starts March 18

Boston UPK partner Families First offers this program to bring parents together to build their knowledge, skills, and support systems. Sign up for the spring session by emailing mlehrman@families-first.org.

STRIVE Self-Care Workshop Saturday, Feb. 27 10-11AM

Boston UPK's partner, Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators (STRIVE) will provide a self-care workshop for parents/caregivers.

Share your experiences and learn about strategies, activities, and resources to practice self-care. Register at tinyurl.com/6zwf3g2c to receive Zoom info.

Who's Ready for Kindergarten?

A Note from Maureen O'Brien, Director at Families First



Getting ready for kindergarten is a big deal for both you and your child. It's an exciting milestone and can also make us as parents a little anxious. You may be asking yourself: "Is my child really ready for this? How will I know?" And due to the events of the last year, you may be extra emotional as you think about all the changes this might mean. Let's tackle a few things together, by first addressing a few things:

- School readiness is more than academics. In other words, it's not just how well your child knows their ABC's or basic numbers. It's also about social and emotional readiness.
- Parents are their child's first and lifelong teachers. That means that you have been helping your child prepare for their learning journey all along, whether you are aware of it or not!
- Communication is key. The relationship you will forge with your child's teachers will be a benefit and shows your commitment to helping your child be their best.

At Families First, we help parents understand that they are the experts on their own child. Some tips in terms of what to look for and guide in terms of school readiness include:

Does your child ask for help when needed? Is your child comfortable with adults besides you? Does your child show interest in books and reading? If the answer to these is yes, your child is showing signs of readiness already. What you can do is to build on these skills: Give your child MORE practice so that they feel confident. Every day you can find an opportunity to ask your child to wait their turn, for instance, which is a great skill for kindergarteners.

PARENTING TIPS

There are so many ways that you can build your child's ability to transition to kindergarten successfully. Here are some other ways you can help:

- Develop routines and structure at home, especially around good sleep practices
- Read WITH your child in your native language and ask questions about what you are reading
- Limit screen time when you can, so your child is not too reliant on screens to entertain them
- Involve your child in small decisions, so they get used to problem-solving
- Talk about why rules are important, so they can practice following them
- Nurture your child's curiosity by following their lead and talking about what interests them

The other way to be helpful with the move to kindergarten is to stay positive about the process yourself. Your child picks up not only on what you say, but also how you say it. If they see you looking forward to their first day, they are likely to echo your enthusiasm. If your child still seems concerned about some aspects, be sure to address them calmly. For instance, if your child is worried about the bus, or spending a longer day at school, do not dismiss their feelings. Say, "I know. Change can be hard and a little bit scary. But I'm right here to help and so is your teacher." Speaking of which, be sure to let their teachers know what's special about your child. That way they can join you in finding ways to reassure and welcome your child. Together, you will be a team with the shared goal of beginning a successful new school year!

SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy Corner)

Jennifer Montrose, Speech and Language Pathologist

Cassandra Crichlow, Occupational Therapist

Each month, the UPK Related Services team shares 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. February will focus on feelings.

As February approaches some start thinking about Valentine's Day or just love in general. This is a great opportunity to focus on expanding your child's knowledge of feelings. Young children are learning much about the world around them and feelings are no different. Children learn by you helping them to label the feelings they are experiencing. For example, if they break their favorite toy they may be experiencing sadness and/or anger. Help them understand by labeling it (e.g. "you are feeling sad because your favorite toy broke" or "you are feeling mad because you can't play with that toy anymore"). Also, give them ways to deal with their feelings (e.g. if they are mad, they can take a break, take a walk, or draw a picture to calm down). Other great ways to explore feelings include reading [books](#), watching videos (see below) and making a feelings collage.

Click on the feeling above each character from the movie Inside Out and learn about each feeling!

[Sadness](#)



[Joy](#)



[Fear](#)



[Anger](#)



Activity Idea: (you will need pictures of faces, scissors, glue/tape, and blank paper) Gather magazines, advertising circulars, etc. and cut out the faces of different people, and then sort them by feeling. Or, make a collage out of one feeling!

Note on Amazon apps: Free Apps for Remote Learning

This is a note that parents/caregivers do not need to pay for Amazon apps for students' remote learning. Here are some handy tips to set up devices for free app usage: tinyurl.com/s2nlo8iz

Reminder - BPS K2 Registration: Priority registration for the Connector

Registration for Kindergarten (K2) in Boston Public schools begins February 8. Families must register during the K2 registration period of February 8-April 5, 2021 to be eligible for the new UPK to BPS K2 Connector and receive priority at Connector Schools. Prepare by learning more about BPS schools your child is eligible for by visiting [Discover BPS](#).



Wellness Wheel – from STRIVE (Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators)

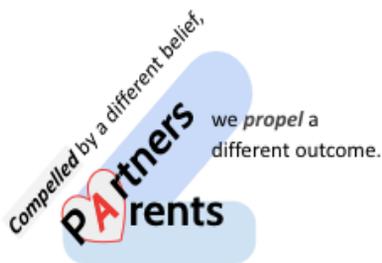
[STRIVE](#) is a collaborative project between Boston Medical Center's [Child Witness to Violence Project](#) and [Vital Village Networks](#) that is partnered with Boston Universal Pre-K.

As we envision our 2021 and prioritizing our wellness and overall well-being, making a plan is the first step. Ensuring that we have a healthy life balance is vital for our health and mental wellbeing. Understanding the wellness wheel and ensuring that you do not neglect any aspect of your wellness can help you live a more balanced and healthier life.

[The Wellness Wheel](#) encompasses these seven dimensions or areas of an individual's life that improve their overall health. These dimensions consist of common characteristics, identities, and behaviors. Assessing needs in the seven areas can help you prevent future health problems and consequences by making healthier choices a habit and part of your everyday life. While we may thrive in some areas and struggle in others, make a plan to understand where you may need support and how you can work and achieve a balanced wellness circle.

For 2021, make a self care plan, take time for yourself, and make sure that you are taking care of everyone around you and yourself. Do you not know where to start? Use J. Flowers Health Institute's [Wellness Worksheet](#) to score your current level of balance when it comes to the wellness wheel.

Source: [Adapted from Clarion University](#)



Abby's Corner: A Reflection from Abby Morales, Program Director, BPS Early Childhood Department

January 20 was sunny and bright – a fitting setting for a new day dawning and symbolic of Martin Luther King’s belief that: **“only light drives out darkness.”** Here is a [tribute](#) to Dr. King in honor of Black History Month.

If you didn’t get a chance to watch the Inauguration live, consider sharing these [highlights](#) with your children as important teachable moments.



Amanda Gorman (Alex Wong/Getty Images)

We suggest spotlighting the particularly powerful words of Amanda Gorman’s [The Hill We Climb](#)

- as *affirmation* of the challenges you and your family have faced over the past year:
“That even as we grieved, we grew. That even as we hurt, we hoped. That even as we tired, we tried.”
- as *aspiration* and role-model for children:
“We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.”
- And finally, as *inspiration* for our shared future:
“If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children’s birthright.”

Please join the **EC Family Council** to learn advocacy skills and get support with the upcoming Kindergarten registration from [Countdown to Kindergarten](#) so that you can make the most informed decision for your child’s placement.

Abby Morales
Program Director
Boston Public Schools Early Childhood Department



BPS kindergarteners