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Application
Deadline is:
JUNE 9

For more info visit our
webpage at:
moraviaschool.org/UPK



WELCOME TO UPK!

BENEFITS BEING SEEN FROM FULL-DAY UPK PROGRAM

Looking to prepare students for kindergarten and beyond, Moravia Central School District recently revamped its universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) program, and positive results are already being seen.

As recent as last year, the district only had two half-day UPK classes with one teacher. The half-day option presented limitations, as students were present for only three hours per day, making it difficult to provide the desired educational opportunities and outcomes.

Seeking to rectify this challenge, last year the district met with the New York State Education Department to discuss potential funding for the program. When funds were presented to the district, the decision was made to provide a new and improved full-day UPK opportunity.

The additional state funding not only allowed the district to establish a full-day program, but also the opportunity to create a model of UPK education that best supports the academic, social, and emotional growth of the students.

"The state provides a blueprint for the types of things they'd like to see, and we certainly follow those checkpoints," Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Ted Love said. "But we also took this opportunity to hire new staff and identify the things needed to make these classrooms state-of-the-art."

To that end, the program strives to be active and engaging academically while also remaining age-appropriate related to student development.

"Our UPK program provides developmentally appropriate activities to help 4-year-olds prepare for Kindergarten," Love said. "As the New York State Learning Standards and expectations become more rigorous, making sure our young children have the basic academic and social skills in place to meet these standards is essential."

With the creation of the full-day program, the district made the decision to implement full math and ELA curriculum into UPK. Topics such as reading and language comprehension are also a part of the daily curriculum, which best sets the students up for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Outside of academic preparation, the UPK program is also trying to support students in the area of social and school readiness.

"Kids need to have social experience in order to develop those social skills," Love said. "The program will also help students develop their school readiness. Things like knowing how we behave in the hallways, how to attend to their learning in the classroom, and work cooperatively with classmates. A lot of times, we're seeing that kindergarten students struggle with these school readiness situations. And if kindergarten teachers are needing to focus on teaching students how to learn, then it takes away from the time teaching what needs to be learned."

Millard Fillmore Elementary School Principal Karen DiVietro echoed those sentiments.

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BENEFITS BEING SEEN FROM FULL DAY UPK PROGRAM CONT.



"The teachers have created not only an engaging, welcoming environment for our first-time students, but it is also a place of high academic standards. Our UPK students are learning essential academic and social-emotional skills they will need in kindergarten and throughout their school years," DiVietro said.

With this in mind, the UPK program at Moravia CSD is treated just like any other grade level at the elementary school. For example, the UPK students participate extracurricular classes such as physical education, art, and music. This allows students to learn from specialized teachers in each area, which will aid their comprehension of each subject moving forward.

The district is cognizant that the early learning programs have the biggest impact on student development. Once a student reaches middle school or high school, significantly more time may be needed to support academic or emotional shortcomings, whereas that same issue could be identified and supported in a fraction of the time in an early learning program.

"I think the benefits of the UPK program really pay off," Love said. "We're following a curriculum that is aligned with the rest of curriculum within the elementary school."

DiVietro said the joy she sees on the faces of the UPK students is a testament that learning can be truly fun.

"I know our UPK program will continue to grow at Millard Fillmore Elementary School and my hope is that all of the children in Moravia can experience the joy of learning as they begin their journey as lifelong learners," she said.

Superintendent John Birmingham said he couldn't be more excited for how well the full-day program has gone thus far.

"I couldn't be more excited to know that it is already making an impact for the students who are in those rooms each day," said Birmingham.

WHAT DO UPK STUDENTS LOVE ABOUT SCHOOL?

"Playing at the art center"
- Brynnlea U.

"Snack and everything else"
- Anna B.

"I like the science center"
- Cole B.

"I love the toys"
- Woodrow L.

MEET THE UPK TEACHERS!

Looking to instill the joy of learning into the youngest students at Moravia Central School District, Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) teachers Melissa Hrycko and Catrina Loomis always seek to keep things fun in the classroom.

Last year, the district established a full-day UPK program complete with two classrooms. Hrycko and Loomis were selected as the teachers for the program, and although year one isn't quite complete, both educators are seeing the benefits of the full-day program.

"It's amazing to see what they do now in UPK and how it impacts them later. We're working on geometry and literacy, and all these amazing things

that are setting the stage for later," Loomis said. "The half-day program was great, but the kids just weren't in school as long as they are now. And now they can go to specials and lunch and move around the building for all these extra activities."

"The students are so capable," Hrycko said. "I think for a long time, the idea was that preschool was only able to give them that socialization piece. And we certainly do that here. But we also give them the challenge of those academic pieces."



Meet Catrina Loomis

Catrina Loomis, who has been teaching for 22 years, had worked with special education students at the high school and elementary school levels for many years. Those experiences have allowed her to gain a unique perspective she can utilize while teaching UPK.

"I understand how important it is for students to learn the fundamentals. I worked with many students who struggled as they grew older," she said.

After receiving her master's degree in literacy, Loomis turned to general education and taught first, third and fourth graders. When the opportunity to teach UPK became available, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I love UPK because the kids love learning. They are excited to learn and come to school, and that's amazing," she said.

While Loomis acknowledges the importance of academic and social development at the UPK level, she said she doesn't want the students to feel like school is anything other than a fun place to be.

"We progress monitor monthly based on colors, shapes, numbers, letters. It's amazing to watch the progress they make each month," she said. "We're teaching a lot of things, but we're also having a lot of fun. It's not like we're running a drill camp. They're learning and having fun along the way."



Meet Melissa Hrycko

Melissa Hrycko has been teaching for 18 years. She received her bachelor's degree at SUNY Oswego in childhood education and then her master's degree from The University of Albany in classroom literacy. She has taught many grade levels throughout her nearly two decade career, but has special connection with UPK.

"I call these kids 'my people.' I can be one of them, all while being their biggest cheerleader and advocate. My biggest joy is watching their confidence build and the kids learning to take pride in their work," she said.

According to Hrycko, it's important for UPK students to take pride in their work and build each other up. To that end, Hrycko and her students have adopted the phrase, "We can do hard things." "It is a motto that can be heard daily in our room. It's important that they believe in themselves and each other," she said. "This is completely evident in their days. They can be seen supporting one another, giving guidance and constructive criticism, congratulating each other on their accomplishments. We build a family based on trust and love. When we feel safe and loved, this is what allows us to become engaged learners which will continue to become important as the academic challenges grow throughout their school careers."

Just like Loomis, Hrycko said it is important to balance academic and social development with the joy of learning.

"Learning is supposed to be fun," she said. "We expose them to everything; social, emotional, and academic growth. We want them to learn how to make friends and play cooperatively. We want them to learn how to sit on the carpet and not only listen to a story, but also ask questions about it. We know they have the capacity for learning and we want to grow those foundational skills. Their first school experience should set the stage for the amazing place that school can be. This is what UPK does and I am so lucky to do it with them!"

UPK CELEBRATES NATIONAL PIZZA DAY

Say cheese!! Our UPK program celebrated National Pizza Day by throwing a pizza party. The program celebrates events similar to this throughout the year.



MCS D UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Moravia Central Schools Pre-Kindergarten program is an age-appropriate instructional program for 4-year-olds that prepares students for a successful transition to kindergarten and beyond. We are excited to announce that the program is now a full day program that operates under the regular school calendar. The school day begins at 7:50 a.m. and ends at 2:35 p.m.

UPK is a state-funded program that introduces young learners to the school environment and focuses on intellectually, socially, and emotionally preparing children for kindergarten. The program will follow the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards.

Program Requirements:

- Child must turn four years old by December 1.
- Child must live within the Moravia Central School District boundaries.
- All Moravia Central School employees are eligible to apply. However, MCS employee status does not automatically guarantee a seat on the roster. Applications will follow MCS Policy #7133 entitled Non-Resident Students (Children of Employees) as well as the guidelines of the Placement Process.
- If you are the parent of twins, triplets, etc., you are required to submit one application per child.

For more information, including the district's selection process and required documents, please visit: www.moraviaschool.org/UPK. If you have questions, please call the Millard Fillmore Elementary school office at (315) 497-2670.

UPK APPLICATIONS

UPK applications are now being accepted for the 2023-24 school year! Sign your child up today and experience the district's new and improved UPK Program!



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UPK STUDENTS GIVING BACK

Brian Langdon from Brian's Kids came by Ms. Hrycko's UPK class to collect four huge boxes of gifts and supplies for Golisano Children's Hospital Hematology/Oncology/Nephrology unit.



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