

PRESS RELEASE

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Pittsfield Public Schools Awarded \$250,000 CPPI Grant to Expand Preschool Access

PITTSFIELD, MA – Pittsfield Public Schools has been awarded \$250,000 through the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) to expand access to affordable, high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds across the city.

This early implementation grant represents a critical step in addressing Pittsfield's longstanding gaps in early childhood education. A 2024–25 community-wide needs assessment revealed that about 25% of Pittsfield's preschool-aged children remain unserved and disconnected to pre-K education, despite over 1,100 available seats. Families cited barriers such as cost, transportation, and limited full-day options, while more than half of incoming kindergartners scored below readiness benchmarks.

Superintendent Latifah Phillips shared:

"With this grant, we are not just expanding preschool access—we are creating a stronger, more equitable early learning system. Every child in Pittsfield deserves to enter kindergarten ready to succeed, and this investment allows us to work alongside our community partners to make that a reality."

The funds will support:

- Hiring a city-wide preschool program coordinator to streamline enrollment and communication.
- Launching a centralized registration system to make preschool access easier for families.
- Providing shared professional development and an instructional coach to ensure consistent quality and effective practices across all providers.
- Expanding inclusive supports so children with disabilities can learn in community-based settings alongside their peers.
- Lay the foundation for increasing access to pre-K programming for those presently not enrolled.

A coalition of community organizations was central in designing the vision for this grant and will continue to play a leading role in its implementation. These partners include Berkshire County

Head Start, Kid Zone, Gladys Brigham Community Center, Boys & Girls Club of the Berkshires, and 18 Degrees, with additional collaboration from Berkshire Community College. The Berkshire United Way will serve as a lead partner. Interim President & CEO of Berkshire United Way, Katherine von Haefen, emphasized the importance of collaboration:

“This grant reflects the collective vision of Pittsfield’s educators, families, and community partners. By working together, we are building a stronger, more connected early childhood ecosystem that reduces barriers, supports families, and ensures every child has the opportunity to thrive.”

The district also recognized BERK12 for facilitating the grant process and ensuring that community voices and needs were central to the proposal.

This \$250,000 award marks the beginning of a multi-year initiative to strengthen Pittsfield’s early childhood education system, with future phases aiming to add preschool seats, expand summer programming, and sustain long-term investments in workforce development and family engagement.

The CPPI network in partnership with Berkshire Head Start will host a teacher pep rally, August 29th, to celebrate the grant, strengthen connections, and launch the 2025-26 school year.

About the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI)

The CPPI is a state-funded program designed to expand access to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, with a focus on underserved communities. The initiative promotes partnerships between public schools, Head Start, and community-based organizations to build inclusive, equitable, and sustainable early education systems.