

School readiness programs help prepare children, parents for kindergarten

Supporters provide homework boxes, backpacks, school supplies

More than 200 kindergartners and their parents in 10 Cincinnati Public Schools were better equipped when school started this year thanks to school readiness events facilitated by 4C for Children.

For the third straight year Lisa Garofalo, 4C for Children's school and community manager, has worked with each school's Community Learning Center (CLC) to facilitate kindergarten orientation as part of the overall effort to support school readiness for parents and children. Her work is made possible by support from the Robert and Adele Schiff Family Foundation.

"These events give incoming kindergartners the opportunity to spend time with their teachers and become oriented to school-day routines, classroom etiquette, school bus riding and lunch procedures," Garofalo says. "And parents have the opportunity to meet with school staff or a 4C parent specialist to learn more about school expectations and curriculum."

The majority of the elementary schools—Evanston Academy, J.P. Parker, Mt. Airy, Mt. Washington, Oyler,

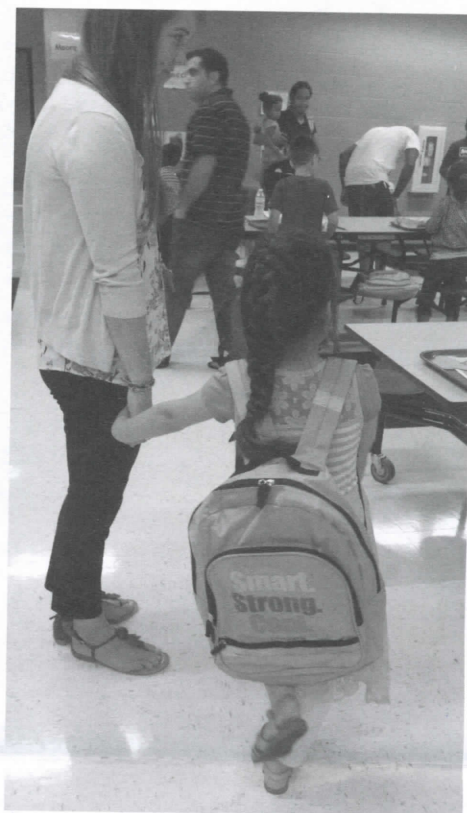
Roberts Academy, Sayler Park, Rees E. Price Academy and Ethel Taylor—held 90-minute sessions over at least three days. The Academy of World Languages held one four-hour event.

"Transition to school is a big life event for young children and their families," Garofalo says. "When everyone is on the same page on day one, that helps begin a successful year for students, parents and teachers."

Diana, a teacher at The Academy of World Languages agrees. The event "really eases the parent-child separation because the children are 'playing school' and the parents are getting information. This makes day one less stressful and fearful for both the parent and the child."

In addition to the kindergarten readiness orientations, 4C staff was also present at school/neighborhood back-to-school events to offer information on choosing quality child care and after-school care to parents.

And it wasn't just information about kindergarten that participating students received. 4C was also able to provide students at various CLC



An incoming kindergartner at the Academy of World Languages sports one of the 300 backpacks donated to 4C by Clever Crazes for Kids.



Monica Arenas-Losacker, 4C bilingual community and family outreach specialist, meets with parents at Roberts Academy to share information about school expectations.

schools with 300 My First Homework Boxes and 300 backpacks—each filled with supplies to help parents help their kindergarten students at home.

The backpacks were donated by Dianne Dunkelman, along with educational materials from Clever Crazes for Kids. The Homework Boxes, assembled by 4C Ambassadors, were created using small pizza boxes donated by LaRosa's. Back-to-school supplies that filled the boxes (crayons, scissors, primary pencils and glue sticks) were donated by 4C supporters like Tom Freeman and Doug Klocke.

"We always loved to buy school supplies ourselves," said Tom, as he dropped off scores of notebooks, pencils, scissors, etc. "So we went shopping to support this 4C project!"