

# Partnering with Public Schools for Full-Day Preschool



## BY CORNELIA STEVENS

Research indicates that children who attend full-day, high-quality preschool show larger gains in literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development, and physical development compared to those who attend half-day preschool. In addition, many parents benefit from the full-day option because it aligns better with their work schedules. However, funding such a model can be quite the challenge for licensed child care facilities, and public-school buildings do not always have the capacity to house full-day preschool classrooms.

TOP Early Learning Centers has been providing full-day/full-year early childhood education since 2003. Our model includes:

- Low student-teacher ratios
- Research- and evidenced-based curriculum
- STEAM education
- Parent engagement
- Case management
- Social-emotional support
- Classroom consultation
- Full nutrition services
- Literacy remediation

Eighty-five percent of TOP graduates enter kindergarten ready to learn. Results from our Longitudinal Study show that TOP graduates are performing better than their peers in reading and math state assessment tests, attendance, behavior, and the need for special education.

For over 15 years, TOP has partnered with Wichita and Derby Public Schools to provide full-day programming. Students

enrolled in either USD 259 or USD 260 are placed in one of our nine classrooms. All our teachers have an early childhood or elementary education teaching license. We use the same pre-K curriculum as both Wichita and Derby Public Schools, so there is a seamless transition for the children enrolled at TOP.

This public-private partnership provides both the school districts and TOP with the opportunity to expand access to full-day early childhood education, while providing at-risk children the opportunity to receive the academic, developmental, and social-emotional support they need to prepare for kindergarten.

The success of our long-term partnership can be attributed to ongoing trust, communication, the quality of care, and student performance. It is a shining example that, when partners think outside the box, everybody wins. ●



## CORNELIA STEVENS

Executive Director,  
TOP Early Learning Centers

Cornelia Stevens has more than 20 years of experience developing collaborative partnerships, creating opportunities for new business development, assessing and identifying needed services, developing programs, and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of programs and services. Much of her professional career has focused on early childhood programming. Cornelia earned a bachelor's degree in Music Therapy from Ohio University and a master's in Business Administration from Baker University.

