

TOP ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS 2010

Demand for universal Pre-K grows at Catholic schools

Five Queens schools offer free Pre-K programs

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Early education may set your child on the fast-track to success. And a growing number of Catholic schools in Queens offer free pre-kindergarten programs.

Research has shown that youngsters in high-quality learning environments are better behaved in class, attend more school, and score higher on reading, math, and critical thinking tests. They are also more likely to avoid teenage pregnancy, attend college and find gainful employment as adults.

Following successful initiatives like Head Start, Project Giant Step and SuperStart Prekindergarten, New York State launched the Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK) in 1997 to provide free education to four-year-olds before that fateful first day of school.

There are currently dozens of Queens public schools providing free UPK and a handful of Catholic schools have joined the mix.

All UPK programs follow a 150-minute curriculum designed to give children a foundation in writing, reading, critical thinking and cooperative learning.

Principal Barbara DeMaio of Most Precious Blood School in Long Island City has overseen her school's UPK program since 2005. She said early education could have a profound effect on children.

"There is a huge difference between children who attend any pre-K program and those who go directly to kindergarten from home," she said. "It truly prepares them for kindergarten."

"We have both full and half-day UPK classes," DeMaio said. "UPK itself is a free two and a half hour per day program. If people choose to enroll their children in the extra time we have available, there is a cost for that."

Full-day classes combine UPK with curriculum designed by the Diocese of Brooklyn, DeMaio said.

"Children who attend pre-K



Most Precious Blood School in Long Island City

learn how to socialize in a group, gradually increase their attention span, learn how to form letters, write their name and do so much more," she added.

Anne-Marie Baumis, the principal of Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Academy in Flushing, said her school added UPK for various reasons.

"Very few Catholic schools offer it," she said. "We thought it would be good for the community. Plus we thought it might be a good way to increase enrollment at our school."

UPK is also in high demand




Holy Child Jesus in Richmond Hill.



St Francis of Assisi in Astoria.

Holy Child Jesus School
111th Street/86th Avenue
Richmond Hill, New York
11418
718-849-3988
www.holychildjesusschool.org



Good Shepherd School
1943 Brown Street
Brooklyn, New York
11229
718-339-2745
www.goodshepherdbklyn.org



Holy Trinity School
14-45 143rd Street
Whitestone, New York
11357
718-746-1479
www.holytrinityrcs.com



Immaculate Conception School
179-14 Dalny Road,
Jamaica New York
11432
718-739-5933
www.icsalumni.org



Holy Family School
74-15 175th Street
Flushing, New York
11366
718-969-2124
www.hfsflushing.org



Holy Name School
241 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, New York
11215
718-768-7629
www.hnjbklyn.org



at Holy Child Jesus in Richmond Hill, said Maryann McMahon, the school's assistant. "Our program last year was very successful," she said. "We had full classes, a waiting list, and even some kids who enrolled in our school."

McMahon said children benefited most from enrolling in both UPK and her school's early education program. "The UPK program is more hands-on, while our pre-K program is more academic," she said.

Five Catholic schools in Queens have UPK programs: Most Precious Blood in Long Island City; St Joseph in Astoria; St Francis of Assisi in Astoria; St Elizabeth in Ozone Park; St Mel in Flushing; and Holy Child Jesus in Richmond Hill.

Two others- Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Academy in Flushing and St Bartholomew School in Elmhurst- will begin UPK programs in September.