Dayton, OH
Early Childhood Education

KEY OUTCOMES

Long-term

Preschool achievement is affiliated with several long-term outcomes, including: **Kindergarten attendance and readiness**, 3rd / 8th grade **reading levels** (and reduced need for costly interventions at this juncture), increased **high-school completion** and **college enrollment rates**, reduced **criminal justice involvement**, and **increased employment** and lifetime earnings.

Short-term

Decrease the **racial attendance and achievement gaps** (i.e., kindergarten readiness assessment) among 4-year-olds in Dayton Preschool Promise preschools; **increase in parent engagement** with Preschool Promise attendance programs (e.g., Star Attendance Program).

BARRIERS

- Lack of access to early childhood education (ECE) (no transit, no centers available nearby, full capacity centers).
- Parental beliefs about ECE that preschool is not a priority and that play is not education.
- Competing priorities and distractions that lead to parents de-prioritizing ECE.
- Structural racial inequalities / implicit bias create kindergarten readiness gap.
- Lack of environments / resources that are conducive to learning for young children in impoverished homes.
- Lack of consistency in parent schedules or childcare availability.

INTERVENTION

Our proposed intervention aims to increase preschool attendance and lower the achievement gap by using three linked strategies:

- Parents complete an "**Attendance Plan & Contract**" that asks them to identify barriers to attendance and define backup plans for each barrier. This also serves as a commitment device for having their child attend preschool at least 90% of each month. The Attendance Plan & Contract will be piloted with teachers this fall.
- Parents at MVCDC preschools will receive **weekly or biweekly "Proactive Text Messages"** throughout the school year about their child's attendance record for the current month, the importance of attending preschool and their commitment to attendance, tips on attendance or social-norm setting for attendance, additional encouragement after holidays and snow days, and the number of days their child can miss before they lose their $25 Star Attendance Award.

INTERVENTION
(Continued)

- TBD: **Thinkscapes**, placed in commonly-used areas such as bus stops, encourage low-achieving children to engage with activities that build their kindergarten readiness skills, extend the conversation around play-based learning into the built environment that parents and children interact with every day, boost recognition of Preschool Promise and their attendance programs, combat the abandonment of public spaces that can occur after tragedies, and promote trauma-informed healing through storytelling and play.

ALIGNMENT TO FIVE CRITERIA

Evidence base
Long-term effects of preschool programs (e.g. Head Start) include reduced requirements for special education or being held back in school, lower dropout rates, lower incidence of arrests in the teen years, and higher employment rates as young adults.

Mayoral priorities
Mayor Whaley is committed to expanding high-quality preschool education for all 4-year-olds in Dayton. Dayton's Preschool Promise is an established initiative, and Dayton voters in 2016 passed a 0.25% income tax increase to support preschool services and to offer one year of affordable, quality preschool education to all Dayton families.

Scalability
Kindergarten readiness gaps are pervasive nationally. The strategies implemented and tested through this engagement will be able to directly inform preschool and broader early childhood education programming in other cities.

Feasibility
BIT has identified a set of evidence-based strategies, all of which are acceptable to the city and appear feasible. They are now working with the city to prioritize those strategies, confirm feasibility and chart a clear path forward.

Leverage taxpayer resources
The intervention will improve the effectiveness of existing programs (with Preschool Promise).