



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Preschool Graduation: Marking a Milestone
Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
Signature: 

Program Overview

The Springer Preschool Academy — the center takes its name from Highland Springs High School’s “Springer” mascot — opened its doors for the first time during the 2007-08 school year. Springer Preschool Academy is a high-quality full-day preschool laboratory operated in conjunction with the Early Childhood Education program at Henrico County Public Schools’ (HCPS) Advanced Career Education Center at Highland Springs High School. The Early Childhood Education program is designed for high school juniors and seniors interested in careers working with young children. HCPS employees can enroll their preschoolers in this academy just like any other local preschool program.

The Springer Preschool “Moving Up” ceremony supports the center’s preschool students. The preschool program serves as the hands-on lab for Early Childhood Education high school students. The ceremony gives our high school students the opportunity to assist in planning and working with the preschoolers as some move on to kindergarten in the fall and others move up to another preschool classroom. The ceremony is an important one for families and an exciting time for preschool students.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Our independent preschool program isn’t a part of the school division’s elementary schools. For many of our families, they have neighbors or friends who may attend a federal program preschool or a private preschool where moving-up ceremonies occur. We wanted to give our students and families the same exciting opportunity for a milestone event as they prepare for their journey at the elementary level.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The Springer Academy, Preschool graduation ceremony celebrates an important milestone for parents and families. When starting the program, new parents are often anxious about dropping off their barely socialized, newly potty-trained child with a group of caregivers they have only met at orientation. Those near-strangers suddenly become the individuals they rely on and a source of valued communication during the day. The joy that our center brings and the progress for students and their parents are worthy of celebration.

How Program Was Carried Out

Planning for a preschool graduation begins a year before. We partnered with the Henrico County Recreation and Parks Department to reserve the historic, county-owned Henrico Theatre in downtown Highland Springs. This theater is a quick drive from our center. Utilizing the Henrico Theatre enables more family members to attend the ceremony.

We completed the necessary paperwork and obtained the appropriate signatures. Our preschool teachers and our high school students work to assist with song selection, practicing motions and movement with the preschoolers for the event, writing the script and assigning duties for the day. They also participate in meetings to discuss details and design digital invitations for parents and our central office stakeholders. We work with Henrico County, receiving training on the use of the audiovisual and sound equipment for the day of the event. We are usually granted a two-day reservation to include a practice day so that students are familiar with the space and have the opportunity to stand on stage and practice routines and songs. This enables the preschoolers to go backstage, look into the audience and see the space transform for their special graduation day.

The preschool students who are “graduating” have the opportunity to walk across the stage with a robe on as well as receive a small diploma. It is a very gratifying experience for the students and their families, as well as the staff.

Financing and Staffing

The operational cost for operating the preschool graduation is minimal. We use funds that are already earmarked for graduation expenses. Because we are using a county building, the program has no facility cost.

Program Results

Based on teacher feedback, and excitement from families and school and theater personnel, the preschool graduation ceremony has been a successful and important addition to our center. We have also incorporated streaming capabilities for family members who cannot attend in person. Our students’ parents are teachers employed by Henrico County Public Schools. Many have family members who cannot attend our ceremony because of work commitments or because they live out of town. A week before the ceremony, we provide a live stream link for families to share

the graduation ceremony. Many parents love the live stream because they can go back and watch it with their preschooler. It also serves as a longtime resource to reimagine the big day.

Brief Summary

The Springer Preschool Academy, an independent preschool program that also serves as hands-on experience for the Early Childhood Education program at HCPS, has successfully instituted a graduation ceremony (“Moving Up”). The academy provides preschooling for the children of HCPS employees, and the graduation ceremony serves as a special punctuation for the preschool experience of these parents and their children. The event is held at the local Henrico Theatre, which creates a fun and inviting atmosphere where students are celebrated for their achievements and growth. It is also live-streamed, which is invaluable to the many staff members who are unable to attend in person because of work conflicts or any other reason. The teachers and assisting high school students organize the entire presentation to make the ceremony a timeless keepsake for everyone involved.

Preschool Graduation: Marking a Milestone Supplemental Material

Video of the preschool graduation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3cpXBIZH4U>