

# Ervin Early Learning Center



10530 Greenwood Rd.,  
Kansas City, MO 64134  
(816) 316-8400



# Freda Markley Early Childhood Center



9201 E Bannister Rd  
Kansas City, MO 64134  
(816) 316-8500

Enrollment

**588**  
**244**

Kindergarten  
Pre-K

Classrooms

**29**  
**17**



Ms. Fowler  
Principal

HickmanMills.org



Ms. Tanner  
Principal

Enrollment

**287**

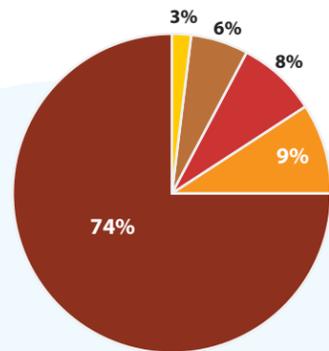
Pre-K

**832**

Total

**46**

**440** Boys  
**392** Girls



Ethnicity

- African American
- Hispanic
- White
- Multi-Racial
- All Others



Ervin Early Learning Center

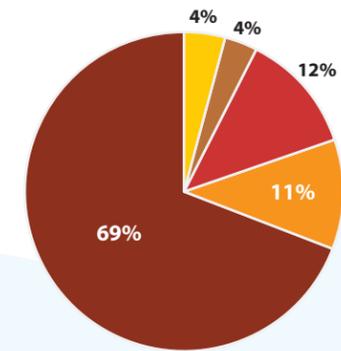
**400**

Freda Markley Early Childhood Center

**125**

Enrolled in LINC before and after-school care program

**167** Boys  
**120** Girls



Ethnicity

- African American
- Hispanic
- White
- Multi-Racial
- All Others



Jimmarie Revels  
LINC Site Coordinator



Sharon Perkins  
LINC Site Coordinator



Casey Conklin  
LINC Site Coordinator



# Hickman Mills leads in early childhood learning

The young pupils at the new Ervin Early Learning Center are used to strangers peeking in on their fun, so for them Friday will be just another day of “talk, read, play,” the motto for preschool advocates.

But it’s a big day for the Hickman Mills School District, which is expecting more than 100 guests to help celebrate its groundbreaking achievement. With the conversion of a former middle school into a haven for preschool and kindergarten students, and a shift in funding priorities, the south Kansas City district is able to offer full-day preschool to all 4-year-old children in its boundaries. Three-year-olds with special needs are also eligible to enroll.

This is the holy grail for educators. Getting young children ready to learn and grow with language, counting and social skills is the best way to ensure their success in elementary school and beyond. “Any child that falls ... below the poverty line, the surest thing you can do to get them into the middle class is quality early childhood education,” said Dennis Carpenter, superintendent of the Hickman Mills district.

Almost all of the area’s leaders believe that’s true. Making it happen is another matter.

A few states pay for universal pre-kindergarten. Missouri and Kansas, unfortunately, have decided that excessively low taxes are a higher priority.

Kansas is in the process of decimating an endowment that for years has funded early childhood programs.

Missouri is spending less for its Preschool Program this year than it did in 2011. It didn’t help that the state recently finished last among nine bidders in a competition for federal grant money.

Gov. Jay Nixon has used tax credits to help finance preschool building projects, and he authorized using federal block grant money for early childhood education. He and the legislature blame one another for the shortfall in preschool



program funding, but the main problem is the unwillingness to raise enough tax revenues to properly invest in children.

The reality is that if communities in this region are going to offer universal preschool, they’re going to have to do it on their own, at least in the short term.

Hickman Mills, a district of about 6,300 students, achieved its goal at a cost. It eliminated reading specialists and tutoring in the early and secondary grades and made other cuts to find about \$3 million in operating money for its preschool program.

That approach won’t work everywhere. For larger districts, the costs are too high.

The Kansas City Public Schools uses federal, state and other funds to provide preschool for about 1,200 children. But officials think an additional 5,000 children within the district’s boundaries could be served. A task force of civic leaders is exploring the possibility of a levy increase to help pay for it.

Everyone will be watching Hickman Mills closely.

Almost 250 preschool students share space in the Ervin Early Learning Center with all of the district’s kindergarteners, who fill 29 classrooms. And 287 more preschool students are enrolled in a separate building, the Freda Markley Early Childhood Center.

If indeed all 4-year-olds in the district are enrolled in full-day preschool, as Carpenter thinks is the case, then Hickman Mills has become a test lab. Due to academic and other problems, most of which began before Carpenter arrived in 2013, the district is provisionally accredited. Educators will be watching academic performance in its early grades over the next few years, looking for the expected bump.

Research suggests it will happen. And that would set a very good precedent for other districts.

*Photos from Ervin Early Learning Center Open House and Ribbon Cutting. Fri., Feb. 20, 2015*

