



Hanna Perkins School

HELPING KIDS BECOME THE BOSS OF THEMSELVES




Toddler • Preschool • Kindergarten

Early learning focused on a strong social-emotional foundation for healthy self-esteem, a love of learning, and to help young children take ownership of their own success.

From the Director

In my time at Hanna Perkins, I have seen many children successfully navigate the challenges of early childhood, embrace the joy of learning, and go on to the next phase of their lives well-prepared to achieve in school, enjoy what life has to offer, and deal effectively with the harder parts.



“There is no other school in the area that is so thoroughly devoted to understanding children and nurturing their growth as individuals and as learners. We feel so fortunate our child had this opportunity during these important early years.”

-Parent of a former student

Hanna Perkins School is a quality early childhood program with highly educated, experienced teachers. What makes it unique is the focus on social emotional development embedded in the curriculum, the emphasis on relationships, and the respect given to the child’s inner emotional life – all the important ideas, questions and feelings that often go unexpressed through words. We work closely with parents, whose input helps us know their child as a unique individual, and who are essential in supporting their child’s ongoing development.

We understand a child’s behavior as communication of feelings that need to be expressed. Here, teachers and parents work together to gain a deep appreciation of each child’s feelings and unique inner life. It is through this understanding of the child’s experience that we are able to support each child in his or her efforts to make sense of the world, feel successful in meeting daily challenges, and be prepared to approach subsequent schooling with confidence and enthusiasm.

You may have heard that Hanna Perkins is a school for children who would struggle in a more traditional environment. In fact, it’s a school for all children. I like to say, simply, that it’s a school for children whose parents place a high value on emotional awareness, and want a higher level of participation in the first school experience.

This brochure provides more information about Hanna Perkins. If it sounds like what you’re looking for in your child’s first school experience, I invite you to follow up with me directly for a conversation and a chance to observe our school at work.

Elizabeth Dreyfuss, MS
Education Director

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Welcome to Hanna Perkins School

Hanna Perkins School is a private, non-profit preschool and state-chartered kindergarten, serving families since 1951.

- We also offer parent/toddler groups, and classroom integration for young children with autism spectrum disorders who are likely to continue their schooling in a traditional school environment.
- Through preparation, predictability and a unique working relationship with parents, we provide children with a sense of security that allows them to fully embrace and enjoy coming to school.
- Small classes, and the additional resource of child development specialists, are integral to an educational model of individualized, intentional strategies that help children become enthusiastic, inquisitive learners.
- Our approach is based on the understanding that a child's ability to manage and communicate inner thoughts and feelings is the foundation for all other success skills. It's the basis of healthy self-esteem, and it fosters success in school and life through the abilities to follow instructions, get along with others and enjoy the academic "risks" of asking questions and making mistakes.
- We're known for our culture of deep respect for each child as a unique individual, and a manner of talking with children that encourages self-expression you didn't think possible.



Hanna Perkins is the right place for children ...

- ... whose parents value proactive emotional guidance that other schools may not offer.
- ... who would do best in a smaller, quieter classroom.
- ... who march to the beat of their own drummer.
- ... who require extra patience and understanding from the adults around them.
- ... who struggle with the routine challenges of childhood, such as self-regulation, self-advocacy or making friends.
- ... who have experienced a disruptive life issue such as adoption, divorce, prolonged illness or death of a loved one.



Kim Fonsky Photography

AS MUCH FOR PARENTS AS IT IS FOR CHILDREN

Academic approach

We teach to the whole child, accounting for the cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs of each individual. Organized, structured classrooms are play-based and child centered, with learning opportunities and skills practice built into every aspect of the day. Teachers use the *Creative Curriculum* as their primary model, and the *Ohio Early Learning and Content Standards* as their guide. A variety of appealing learning materials, presented in an orderly fashion and changed according to children's needs, provides opportunity for exploration, engagement, creativity and problem solving.

Reading and math skills are introduced systematically using concrete materials in small learning groups, and practiced during free activity times. Teacher- and child-made books promote writing and communication skills. Science lessons develop out of children's interests, observations of the natural environment, and their work in the school garden. Social studies lessons center around their life experiences. Art, music and outside time are provided daily.

Throughout, children are encouraged to play and work independently; make their own choices; think for themselves; and develop self-care, self-regulation and executive functioning skills that are essential to success in school and life.

Parent involvement

You know your child best, and you'll have an active role in his or her first school experience.

You'll be part of a formal learning team that includes the teacher and a child development specialist, who meets regularly with you to support your child's development and learning.

In the process, you'll gain a new understanding of the developmental stages your child is experiencing, and pick up some helpful tools that can make the difficult role of parenting more comfortable and intuitive.

Child specialists

Our child development specialists are credentialed mental-health professionals with additional training from Hanna Perkins. Their role is to observe in the classroom and offer an important third-party view of your child's progress and needs.

Specialists don't give advice; they meet regularly with parents, engaging in dialogue to fully understand what each child is experiencing, and support consistency between home and school.

Parents often tell us this additional dimension provides a deeper understanding of their child, and makes them more confident and content in the parenting role.

A small school with a big footprint

Hanna Perkins Center provides training to early childhood educators and childcare workers across Northeast Ohio. This training focuses on understanding and nurturing social-emotional development in children for the skills that support a love of learning, strong relationships and a healthy sense of self.

Through *Starting Point* and Cuyahoga County's *Invest In Children initiative*, we also provide consulting services to other area preschools and child care centers.

We hope you'll spend more time getting to know Hanna Perkins School. But wherever your child eventually enrolls, there's a good chance someone there has been influenced by our approach to early education.

Snacks and meals

Our food program is mindful of your child's good nutrition, but goes farther – serving as an opportunity to exercise curiosity, develop helpful social skills and foster a positive relationship with food and meals.

Snacks and lunches are prepared on-site with whole food – natural; low in added sugar; and free of artificial flavors and colors, hydrogenated oil and chemical preservatives.

An emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables includes serving food the children grow and harvest in our teaching garden.

Food is served family style, with children participating in setup and cleanup, and learning to pass and share. Discussion at the table includes relevant topics such as serving sizes, and learning to listen to one's body to determine how much to eat.

Children are encouraged to try new foods, and are welcome to request foods the others might enjoy – turning experimentation into an enjoyable social experience.



Campus highlights

TEACHING GARDEN: A learning platform for science concepts, cooking activities, nutritional basics and social skills such as cooperation and patience. It creates a connection between the natural world and the food we eat, and is integrated into the curriculum.

FULL GYM & PLAYGROUNDS: Providing opportunity to develop and practice gross motor skills in the context of structured activities and group games – even roller skating.

PARENT AMENITIES: Easy, plentiful parking, and free wi-fi in waiting areas.

HISTORIC BUILDING: The award-winning restoration of the former Malvern Elementary School in Shaker Heights includes spacious classrooms with natural light, on-site kitchen, and school and community playgrounds.



“I learned that what children need most is to feel understood. They need a witness to their inner emotional experience. HPC helped translate this mysterious inner world into something I could recognize and understand. Once my child felt understood, everything changed. Everything.”
-Parent of a former student

Our HISTORY

A DIRECT CONNECTION TO THE EARLIEST PRESCHOOL IN CLEVELAND

Cleveland Day Nursery

1880

Cleveland's first nursery school is founded by an organization that comes to be known as the Cleveland Day Nursery Association (DNA). It eventually operates several schools and a training program for nursery school teachers.

Dr. Anny Katan

1946

Dr. Anny Katan, a psychoanalyst, spends WWII in the German-occupied Netherlands, where she works through mothers to provide therapy to children who may have had traumatic wartime experiences. In 1946 she immigrates to Cleveland and begins working with the DNA. She envisions a new kind of preschool, where parents receive guidance in fostering their children's development, while the children themselves learn the social and emotional skills needed to become ready for school.

University Hospital
Nursery School

1951

The DNA opens University Hospital Nursery School under Katan's model. Over the next decade, a therapeutic clinic (now the Hadden Clinic at Hanna Perkins) is added.

Hanna Perkins School

1961

University Hospital Nursery School moves to a new building and is renamed Hanna Perkins to honor two families that fostered the region's Day Nursery movement. A decade later, DNA is one of five organizations that merge to form the Center for Human Services (CHS).

Independent Non-Profit

1980

With its focus now different from Hanna Perkins, CHS (later renamed the Centers For Families & Children) agrees to spin off the school as an independent non-profit agency. The two organizations continue an active working relationship.

Move to Shaker Heights

2003

When a large University Hospitals development project requires the land Hanna Perkins occupies, the school moves to its current location in Shaker Heights.

A Community Resource
for Parents and Educators

today

Even as Hanna Perkins continues to evolve for the needs of a changing world, the services for which it was founded remain central to its mission: Partnering with parents to provide young children with the social-emotional skills to succeed in school and life; supporting healthy emotional development; and training early childhood professionals.

Parent/Toddler Group

Parent/Toddler play groups are not all the same. Every moment of our program is mindfully designed to benefit the child and parent alike.

Over the course of 90 minutes, twice a week, children experience transitions, excitement, sharing, waiting and cooperation – learning to manage these ordinary challenges while spending quality time playing with a loved one in a comfortable environment.

Parents/caregivers come to recognize developmental stress points from the child's perspective, learning what to say for gentle, effective guidance that helps the child through routine social challenges.

A structured, predictable schedule helps toddlers with their rudimentary understanding of time, and frees them to enjoy activities without worrying about what might happen next. It also begins preparing them for the structured group environment they'll experience later at school.

- Ages 15 months–3 years
- Tuesday-Wednesday, 9:30-11 a.m.
- 3:1 student-to-teacher ratio / 1:1 student-to-parent ratio
- Child development specialist on-hand for regular consultation at no additional cost
- Healthy snack served at each session
- Financial assistance available



Curriculum

Teachers help parents give meaning to, and verbalize, each child's actions. This helps the child start sequencing actions and build narratives – prerequisites for symbolic thinking, language development and literacy.

Children are introduced to the natural world through growing plants, weather observations and attention to small animals. Art activities, dramatic play, puzzles, books, and mindfully selected toys support fine motor skills, problem-solving, increased attention span, tolerance for frustration and pleasure in mastery of basic skills such as holding a marker or using scissors.



Preschool

Your child will have fun in our play-based preschool while developing internal controls and the ability to operate independently within a structured setting.



Every moment is mindfully constructed. Language and writing skills are embedded in all aspects of the curriculum, frequently using teacher- and children-made books. Numbers and math are taught using concrete materials and learning tools, allowing children to discover important concepts. Social studies, science and art are taught using an *emergent curriculum* approach that responds to each child's interests and abilities.

But before a child can succeed academically, he or she must be able to express needs and concerns, follow instructions, participate in group activities and socialize with peers. This developmental support for your child's self-care, self-regulation and self-expression is our specialty.

- Ages 3-5
- Monday-Friday, 9:15 a.m.-1 p.m. (until noon on Friday)
When starting, children often leave sooner, and the day is lengthened as they become ready
- 6:1 student-to-teacher ratio
- Healthy snack and family-style lunch
- Regular collaboration between teachers, parents and child development specialists



Managing separation

If you want your child to love school, the first experience shouldn't start with the worry of seeing you walk out the door. Learning to say goodbye to you – even for a few hours – is a big deal. We work closely with you to manage this separation process mindfully and patiently, so it's your child's choice to go to school.

Even then, children occasionally have strong missing feelings. We acknowledge these emotions and allow children to feel them fully. Soon enough, they learn to manage these feelings comfortably on their own.

Toilet mastery and self-care

Using the bathroom is one of the most common preschool worries for children and parents alike. Our bathrooms are set up for your child's success – offering easy access, privacy and child-sized fixtures that encourage them to take ownership of their bodily self-care.

When a child needs extra support, teachers use helpful words and reinforce the work parents have started for a gentle, nurturing path to mastery of this and other aspects of self-care, such as eating, dressing and care of their belongings.

Kindergarten

Young learners make an important transition from a focus on themselves, family and play to an interest in the outside world, the process of learning, and developing friendships. They move from academic preparation – math and reading readiness – to academic practice.

It's also when children begin to experience themselves as part of a group – learning to enjoy games and group activities simply for pleasure of participating.

In the gentle setting of our state-chartered kindergarten, children take these important steps with a curriculum designed to foster independence and curiosity, and teachers trained to support acquisition of the academic skills necessary for 1st Grade.

Students gradually take increasing responsibility for their own learning – choosing to learn for their own gratification rather than expecting an external reward.

Small classes assure lots of close attention for each child. Reading, math and science concepts are introduced in learning groups, after which children progress at their own pace as they complete daily assignments at learning centers. They also engage in a variety of art and construction activities during independent work time.

An *emergent curriculum* approach allows children to explore their interests through a variety of modalities.

Every day includes developmentally mindful physical activity on the playground or in the gym.

Preparation for 1st Grade also includes an increasing separation between home and school as the school year proceeds.

- Ages 5-7
- Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. (until noon on Friday)
- 6:1 student-to-teacher ratio
- Healthy snack and family-style lunch
- Regular collaboration between teachers, parents and child development specialists



Conscience & self-esteem

The conscience is the root of healthy self-esteem, and its development typically begins at kindergarten age. How it's supported by trusted adults has a big impact on a child's ability to act in a way that feels good inside versus simply following the actions of others.

Our teachers and child development specialists work with parents to help each child become friends with his or her conscience – to see it as an “inside helper” who empowers the child to make good choices and consider the feelings of others - in turn leading to good feelings about him/herself.



Autism Spectrum Early Learning

Hanna Perkins School accepts children for integration into preschool and kindergarten classrooms despite difficulties in social communication and emotional regulation associated with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Informed by our relationship-based approach, our work in this area fills an important gap for young children who occupy a high-functioning range of the ASD spectrum. Our small preschool and kindergarten classes provide a patient, developmentally minded environment where children can get the attention and special help they need for developing social-emotional controls.

Children who qualify will have age-appropriate self-care skills and be able to communicate verbally. We work with families to determine if the environment we provide will meet their child's needs.

APPROVED PROVIDER FOR

- Ohio Autism Scholarships
- Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarships
- EdChoice



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE DURING AND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Like all schools, Hanna Perkins had to adjust quickly at the onset of the pandemic. The social-emotional focus that sets our program apart made that process smoother.

Here are some things we've always done that improved safety before, during and since the pandemic:

- Empowering children to be in charge of themselves and their bodies results in less physical contact among students and teachers than at many schools.
- Small class size, designed to give children ample time and attention to gain mastery of their emotions, reduces exposure risks.
- Spacious classrooms that encourage respectful play-based learning allow children adequate space to practice social distancing.
- Self-contained classrooms that support meaningful relationships between teachers and students also minimize exposure to students and staff in other parts of the school.
- Separate playground areas for preschool and kindergarten minimize the number of children handling toys or using equipment.

Application process

The process begins with a meeting with the school director, and a scheduled classroom observation for parents without the child present.

After deciding to apply, parents meet with the director a second time to provide information about the child. Paperwork begins during this stage of the process, as do financial aid considerations. Before enrollment is finalized, an observation visit with one of the teachers is arranged for you and your child together, in the appropriate classroom.

As a small school focused on the individual needs of each family, the length of this process can vary, and - depending on available openings - children may enter throughout the school year.

TUITION, AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

Cost to attend Hanna Perkins School is comparable to that of other private schools in the Greater Cleveland area. Financial aid is available based on a family's ability to pay, and is determined during the application process.

Hanna Perkins Preschool participates in the Universal PreKindergarten program (UPK) sponsored by Invest in Children.

Hanna Perkins School is an Ohio Autism Scholarship provider, a Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship provider, and EdChoice provider.

“Hanna Perkins provided me with a parenting foundation that stands to this day. It fundamentally altered the trajectory of my children’s lives.”

-Parent of a former student

OTHER SERVICES

Mental health counseling for children,
adolescents & families

Postpartum depression treatment

Parent support and childhood enrichment

Professional training and consulting

Child psychoanalytic training



Hanna Perkins Center
for Child Development

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- Noelle Marotta, Education Director

