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100% of Preschoolers Get Learning Checkups *Columbus Kids exceeds goal in first year*

(Columbus) — Columbus Kids: Ready. Set. Learn finished its first year by recruiting 106 community partners, expanding into a third community and beating its own participation goals by 20 percent, successfully administering Learning Checkups to 1,330 preschoolers or 100% of children aged 2 ½ to 4 years old living in its phase one neighborhoods of Weinland Park and central city Columbus.

Columbus Kids is a program of Columbus City Schools and United Way of Central Ohio. It is the first of its kind in the nation to screen preschoolers for the early detection of developmental delays and potential learning obstacles including speech, hearing and vision problems prior to entering kindergarten. When a Learning Checkup reveals a need, Columbus Kids helps the family find health and remedial services for the child. It also provides families with learning resources appropriate for their child's age.

"Families and our partners are finding this to be a positive, helpful program. Our partners are finding it easy to administer Learning Checkups. And we are helping children get the specific services they need, tracking their progress and measuring the impact," said Janet E. Jackson, President and CEO of United Way of Central Ohio.

"We believe Columbus Kids will help us better prepare our young students for success in school, and we're excited about the possibilities. Nearly 40 percent of our kindergarteners begin school needing extensive remedial services. Columbus Kids is identifying these children early and helping them get the services they need," said Dr. Gene T. Harris, Superintendent/ CEO of Columbus City Schools.

The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs at Ohio University conducted the first-year evaluation of Columbus Kids and found 55 percent of all children screened with a Learning Checkup were on target for school readiness, 28.5 percent needed services or additional assessment, and 16 percent warranted monitoring.

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Columbus Kids Exceeds 1st Year Goal

Among the top reasons for referrals:

- Social/emotional needs (16%)
- Problem solving (10%)
- Fine motor skills (9.9%)

Social/emotional skills include communication, interaction with others, emotional control and behavior management.

The report noted that 36% of children needing services were receiving them or on a wait list. The report also found:

- 39% of families could not be reached for follow up because of disconnected phones, invalid addresses or limited English Language proficiency.
- 38% of families were reluctant or unable to pursue services.

Columbus Kids has stepped up its follow-up services, collecting multiple phone numbers and contact information during the checkup. They also meet face to face with families whenever possible to connect them with services, calling them on the phone, and setting appointments. Preschoolers receive Learning Checkups every six months, allowing families to track progress for school readiness. The second round is already underway and 30 percent of preschoolers have already received their second checkup.

In November 2010, Columbus Kids expanded into the Linden area to reach 1,224 preschoolers in that community. The program plans to bring Learning Checkups to the south side of Columbus in May where 928 preschoolers reside.

Columbus Kids is funded by the Columbus City Schools, Columbus City Schools Education Foundation, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, JP Morgan Chase Foundation, Limited Brands Foundation, Nationwide Foundation and individual donors.