

Waterford: State renews funding for at-home Pre-K learning program

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Madison, WI (March 7, 2022) — [Data released in recent months](#) show the achievement gaps in Wisconsin are as broad as ever. In an effort to close those gaps, the state is continuing funding a PreK learning program in 6 districts where the gaps are greatest.

The program, Waterford Upstart by nonprofit Waterford.org, helps children show up for kindergarten prepared and confident to receive instruction on the first day of school, and their parents and caregivers are more engaged with them, according to [independent research](#). That's why state leaders continued funding so another 1,000 children in Wisconsin can access the program at no cost to their families.

"We're happy to see the state extend the partnership with Waterford.org," said Amy Shepherd, the director of early learning for the Racine Unified School District. "Our district believes early education is an important part of a child's success in school, and Waterford Upstart has been a helpful tool for families in our community. Not only does it provide an educational component, but the personalized coaching helps families to be engaged and successful in the Waterford Upstart program."

[Waterford Upstart](#) is an at-home, early education program that prepares 4-year-old children for kindergarten during the year before they start school. Families are given the tools they need to be their child's first and most influential teachers. Those tools include a computer and internet, both at no cost, if a family needs that. The program provides positive parent-child interactions while delivering personalized, online instruction that is fun and engaging. Children spend just 15 minutes a day on the personalized program, five days a week learning to read. There's also an option to do an additional 15 minutes of math and science instruction. Finally, families are supported by a coach and given tips to continue

engaging their children offline.

On average, 92% of the children who use Waterford Upstart are ready for kindergarten — compared to a 65% average nationwide and 48% for children who qualify for free and reduced-priced meals at school. The average Waterford Upstart graduate enters kindergarten reading at nearly a first-grade level and maintains those gains through the fourth grade.

“Reaching children early is the best way to help them succeed,” said Kim Fischer, the national spokesperson for Waterford.org. “Our partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is removing many of the barriers families face when it comes to early learning. We look forward to more equitable outcomes across the state for qualifying families.”

Families with children entering kindergarten in the fall of 2023 in the following school districts can register now at waterford.org/summer: Green Bay Area Public School District, Racine Unified School District, Milwaukee Public Schools, Lac du Flambeau No. 1 School District, North Crawford School District, and Siren School District.