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Local preschools earn high marks

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NEWARK -- Several local full-time private preschools earned ratings in a voluntary system, showing they go beyond minimum state standards for child care.

Preschools can sign up for the voluntary rating system, called Step Up to Quality. In Licking County, four full-time private centers have been given one-star ratings, while six other part-time and Head Start centers have achieved two- and three-star ratings.

The Child of God Preschool, 88 N. Fifth Street in Newark, is one of those four full-time preschools that has achieved the rating.

"It's a step above the regular licensing," said Nancy Higgins, administrator. "I think it helps with the longevity of staff."

Among the standards for the one-star rating, classes must have small teacher-child ratios, receive 10 hours of specialized training per year, and provide at least one employee benefit to staff members.

Along with the rating, which shows parents the center is above-and-beyond the minimum standards, the school also receives funding to help with projects.

"We were able to use that money to make upgrades," Higgins said, pointing out new tables and chairs in some of the preschool's four rooms.

Child of God Preschool, located on the second floor of the First United Methodist Church for 11 years, conducts classes two, three or four days a week, depending on a child's age.

The classes are mainly 9 to 11:30 a.m., although an extended learning class lasts until 2:30 p.m. for some.

"It's a great option for parents," Higgins said. "They want their child to have a longer day at school."

Higgins said preschool is important for young children as much for daily interactions as it is for learning the alphabet and other kindergarten-related topics.

"Preschool is almost a must" with what you need to know by kindergarten," she said. "They need to know how to share and take turns, (and) listening to somebody else beside (their) parents."