



The Patriot-News

Quality pre-K benefits children

Sunday, June 03, 2007

As a Head Start director and employee of Keystone Children and Family Services, I know that children who participate in quality pre-K programs like Head Start enter kindergarten ready to learn, with better reading, math, language, cognitive and social skills. Without this quality early education, these at-risk children would typically enter kindergarten behind their more affluent peers. Children who start behind stay behind.

Head Start enrollment is based on federal poverty guidelines; a family of four can make no more than \$21,000 a year. Families who earn more do not qualify for Head Start, and often cannot afford private preschool. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, the governor's \$75 million pre-K initiative, would fill this gap. This voluntary program would provide high-quality pre-K programs to 11,000 additional preschoolers.

PA Pre-K Counts has value for all of Pennsylvania. Extensive studies conclude that every \$1 spent on quality pre-K saves the public an estimated \$17 in future costs associated with welfare, education and other services. Other states have seen the value of pre-K. It is time that Pennsylvania began to invest in its future by investing in young children.

All Pennsylvania children deserve these opportunities.

-- JO PEPPER, Executive Director, Capital Area Head Start Susquehanna Twp.

Keep it private

I have been reading articles on breast-feeding in public and also the recent "nursing mom's rally" at the State Capitol.

I have four adult children and I breast-fed all four as babies. None of my children sucked their thumbs, nor did I use pacifiers.

However, I do believe that breast-feeding should be done in the privacy of your own home (not publicly), where the mother and baby can truly have time to bond, relax, and the baby has time to eat peacefully and the mother does not have to worry about people.

When a baby is conceived, it is not done in public, it is done in private.

Yes, I know breast-feeding is the best nutritional value you can give your child during the early stages of their

development. That is why I did it. Between breast-feeding, I supplemented that with bottle feedings, because you really have no way of knowing just how much your child is really getting and I had four healthy children.

I also feel when you have a young baby who is "always hungry," you should try to schedule your trips outside the home between feedings. This may not always be feasible but that is where the bottle could be used in lieu of breast feeding.

-- MARY DAWSON-PAYNE, Lower Paxton Twp.

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