

Daily Courier

Pre-K counts for Frazier

By Judy Kroeger

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The Frazier School District has received a \$312,000 state Pre-K Counts grant and will begin a pre-kindergarten program this fall. The district already budgeted \$50,000 for the program. Classes will start in late September or early October.

Superintendent Dennis Spinella said parents of young children in the district responded positively last spring to a survey asking if they wanted such a program. "We're very excited about this," he said.

Gov. Ed Rendell signed Act 45 into law July 20, establishing the Pre-K Counts program.

The Frazier Board of Education will have to hire two full-time teachers certified in early childhood education. Two half-day classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, will be offered. Each class will last for 2 1/2 hours daily. All classes will be taught at Perry Elementary School. Students will be served a nutritious snack daily. Although parents will not have to pay for pre-kindergarten, they will be responsible for student transportation.

"I'm very excited about this grant. We anticipate up to 80 4-year-olds," said Pat Thomas, curriculum and federal grants supervisor, "twenty in each class session. Each session will have one teacher and up to two aides, depending on enrollment."

Because the state has just notified Frazier of the grant, it has waived the requirement that the district hold 180 days of pre-kindergarten classes. Thomas said they have 30 days from the first day of school, Aug. 27, to begin pre-kindergarten.

"We anticipate having the same calendar in future years," Thomas said.

The 4-year-olds will experience the Creative Curriculum program from Kaplan Early Learning Co., which fulfills the state academic standards. The classrooms will be designed with play and academic areas. Thomas said the teachers will concentrate not only on teaching academic skills, but also socialization.

The students will attend a half-day pre-kindergarten program this school year, then attend a short kindergarten readiness program next summer and be ready for all-day kindergarten in fall 2008.

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