



Week of 03/12/07

What's New with Pre-K Today?

Last week the House and Senate Appropriations Committees held their hearings on the Department of Education's budget. Regarding the Governor's \$75 million Pre K Counts proposal to provide voluntary, high quality pre-K to about 11,000 3 and 4 year olds delivered through a mixed service delivery system, Secretary Zahorchak noted: "Study after study has shown that quality pre-Kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs serve as the building block for future student achievement. Research from Rand and others tells us that every dollar invested yields \$6-17 in benefits to taxpayers."

A number of legislators on the House and Senate panels focused their questions on the structure of the Governor's proposal under the Accountability Block Grant and the need to prioritize state spending in a very tight budget year. They sent a strong message that this is going to be a tough budget and we will have to demonstrate significant constituent support to win the investment in pre-K. The nature of the debate is setting up to be should we fund pre-K, at what level and who should run it. The good news is no one suggested that pre-K is NOT a good investment of public funds. In fact, a number of members on the committees from both parties expressed acknowledged the strong research base supporting pre-K.

What's Happening Next?

The House and Senate are in legislative session in Harrisburg this week and next. Remember, that means they are in Harrisburg on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday but back home in their district offices the rest of the week. Now that the budget hearings are over, the House and Senate will begin crafting an initial budget bill or bills. The initial bill or bill is best thought of as a conversation-starter and in some years budget bills never see the light of day.

Our job is to be sure that legislators hear from their constituents and understand that pre-K is good for their community.

What Can You Do this Week to Support Pre-K?

We urge you to take the following action steps (if you have not already done so) this week:

- 1. Join the Pre-K Today Coalition as an endorsing organization.** CLICK HERE to join: <http://www.prektoday.org/signup.shtml> All campaign endorsers will be posted on our website to demonstrate the scope of our support to policymakers and the media. More than 200 organizations already have joined the coalition. Join the growing list of supporters!
- 2. Sign on to the Coalition's first letter to the legislature urging them to support pre-K.** CLICK HERE to sign on: http://www.prektoday.org/how_signon_letter.shtml Deadline to sign-on is CLOSE OF BUSINESS, March 14th. We currently have approximately 75 groups signing onto the letter; our goal is 250 and your support will help get us there!

www.prektoday.org
717-236-5680

*** If you endorsed the Pre-K Today Coalition in Step 1 and you also want to sign on to the letter to the legislature, you **MUST** sign on to the letter in Step 2. Endorsing the Coalition AND signing on to the letter are SEPARATE activities.

- 3. Reserve May 8 in your calendar to come to Harrisburg for Lobby Day.** We need to see you there!

- 4. Call your legislator's local district office and set up a time to go and visit** along with some of your partners from the school district, child care, Head Start and early intervention. You also may wish to invite key business leaders and other community leaders who support pre-K. If you don't know who your legislators are, click on the link below and enter your address and zip code. Go here:
<http://www.capwiz.com/papartnerships/state/main/?state=PA&view=myofficials#0>