

## **If Asked Script**

**1) What is the Governor proposing for early childhood education this year?**

The Governor's FY 2008-2009 budget proposal increases funding for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts by \$12.6 million to serve an additional 1,000 children and expand some half-day programs to full-time based on parent demand. This would increase the program to \$87.6 million and would enable 12,000 of Pennsylvania's 3- and 4-year olds to attend quality half- and full-day pre-kindergarten in public schools, Head Start programs, child care centers with a STAR 2 or higher rating and licensed nursery schools.

**2) Has the Governor proposed any other initiatives relating to child care?**

Yes. The Governor has proposed \$48.8 million in new state investments to improve access through Child Care Works and improve quality of child care through Keystone STARS. These investments are vital to the child care system in Pennsylvania. Pre-K and child care work hand in hand.

**3) What is included for child care subsidy? Are funds available to be sure that low-income working parents have good child care so they can go to work?**

Yes. The Governor proposed to expand the "Child Care Works" subsidy program. This program helps parents who are working hard to provide for their families and gives children the opportunity to participate in an early childhood program. In FY 2008-2009, it is estimated that more than 234,000 children will participate in the program.

**4) Did the Governor propose anything to improve child care quality?**

Yes. The Governor proposed an increased investment in Keystone STARS. Keystone STARS/Keys to Quality is the largest voluntary quality improvement program for child care in the country. In FY 2008-2009, more than 170,000 children will benefit. An increase of \$4.6 million is proposed to support program improvement and assure that more children have high-quality child care.

**5) Did the Governor propose anything else for Head Start?**

No, the Governor did not propose an increase in the Head Start State Supplemental this year but Head Start providers are eligible to participate in Pre-K Counts.

**6) How do we know that child care providers, that are overseen and regulated by the Department of Public Welfare and not the Department of Education, can deliver high quality education services?**

In order to receive funding, providers must comply with early learning standards and the pre-K regulations advanced by the State Board of Education. Child care providers that have achieved at least a STAR 2 level may be eligible to apply for the *Pre-K Counts* grant as long as they can meet the requirements noted above. Over 1,100 child care programs in Pennsylvania have made quality improvement through STARS and have achieved at least a STAR 2 level. These providers will have appropriate oversight from both departments if they participate in Pre-K Counts.

**7) Will child care and Head Start providers employ more certified teachers to provide pre-K services? How would you fill those positions?**

Many child care and Head Start programs already have teachers with degrees working in their preschool classrooms. But, all community providers, including child care and Head Start providers will be required to staff pre-k classrooms with at least a teacher with an associate's degree. Those associate degreed teachers in Pre-K Counts sites will need to earn a bachelors degree in ECE and become a certified teacher by the year 2012. In addition private community providers could partner with school districts to provide pre-K. The school district could provider the certified teacher and the child care program or Head Start program could provide the space and a full-day of care to meet the needs of working parents. The Commonwealth helps child care providers employ and maintain qualified teachers through the T.E.A.CH. program.

**8) Why should we have child care centers, Head Start providers and private nursery schools providing pre-K? Is it good for the student, the community and the school district?**

Any provider that serves at-risk children and meets the standards and regulations can apply. In other states such as Illinois, New York and New Jersey, a large percentage of pre-K is delivered through community-based private providers. Some communities will end up with partnerships between each of these core stakeholder groups and building on each of their strengths. In some communities, public schools don't have the physical space to serve preschoolers and they will be happy to partner with private providers to assure their children enter kindergarten ready to learn. Head Start programs have experience providing Pre K to the at risk child that need Pre K most. Having a diverse group of possible Pre K providers helps in developing a flexible Pre K system that maximizes resources and meet community needs.