



Pennsylvania's Pre-K Counts Initiative

Meeting National Quality Standards

This spring the Pennsylvania General Assembly is considering a new initiative, Pre-K Counts. Pre-K Counts is Governor Rendell's \$75 million proposal in the 2007-08 to provide approximately 11,000 3- and 4-year-olds with voluntary, high-quality pre-K delivered through a mixed service delivery system in which all providers comply with State Board of Education pre-K regulations and the state's early learning standards. Pre-K Counts is built upon the strong research base that demonstrates for every \$1 spent on high quality pre-k, a \$17 return is realized in reduced education, crime and social welfare costs.

What are the standards that yield strong return on investment?

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research. Since 2003, NIEER has published the State Preschool Yearbook, a series of annual reports profiling state-funded pre-K programs in the United States. As part of this project, the Quality Standards Checklist – a 10 point scale – which is a catalog of features of a high quality pre-K program, representing a set of minimum criteria needed to ensure effective pre-K programs, especially when serving disadvantaged children. These benchmarks were agreed upon as the core standards to operate quality pre-k programs by the nation's leading researchers in the field.

Pennsylvania currently receives a "4" on the "10" point scale. But, if we implement Pre-K Counts as proposed, we will score a 9+ and operate a high quality program designed to assure that students enter school ready to learn and prepared to succeed.

Pre-K Today is a statewide non-partisan campaign launched by a broad-based coalition from around the Commonwealth committed to efforts to advance dedicated state financing for voluntary high-quality pre-kindergarten programs designed to assure that Pennsylvania's children enter school ready to learn and prepared to succeed.

NIEER Benchmark	Pre-K Counts	Does Pre-K Counts meet the NIEER standard?
Comprehensive early learning standards	Curriculum used in Pre-K Counts classrooms must be aligned to with Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards. http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/Early_Learning_Standards_August_05.pdf	Yes
Lead teachers must have a BA	School district providers must hire lead teachers with a BA and certification in ECE, and this requirement will apply to all lead teachers in the program by December 2011. For the initial years of the program, lead teachers in Head Start and child care settings must have at least an AA in ECE or development. Programs in nursery schools must have a BA and be licensed to teach in a private academic school. http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter4/s4.20.html	Yes, Pre- K Counts will fully meet the standard by 2011
Lead teachers must have a specialization in pre-K	See above and by 2011, all teachers regardless of provider will be required to possess a bachelor's degree and early childhood certification	Yes, Pre-K Counts will fully meet the standard by 2011
Assistant teachers must have a CDA or equivalent	During the initial years of the program requirements for teacher aides are determined by the requirements that govern the particular provider type. The requirements will change with the 2009-2010 school year, when assistant teachers must have at least an AA degree, must have finished at least 2 years of college, or must have an "ability to meet a rigorous standard of quality." such as Child Development Associate (CDA) certification.	Yes, Pre-K Counts will fully meet the standard by 2009 academic year
Teachers must complete at least 15 hours of in-service training each year	Lead teachers must complete 180 clocks hours over 5 yrs of professional development that meets Act 48 requirements or earn 6 college credits per five year period. Assistant teachers must receive at least 24 hours of professional development per year.	Yes
Maximum class size of 20 or lower	The maximum class size is 20.	Yes
Staff-child ratio of 1:10 or better	The required staff-child ratio is 2:20.	Yes
Vision, hearing, and health screening and referral are required, along with at least 1 family support service	The Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards require that programs provide parents with information on medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs in the community. School district operation programs are required to provide developmental serves as well as nutritional services or referrals for pre-K students. Available here: http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter12/s12.41.html	Yes
At least 1 meal is offered per day	Full-day programs must offer at least one meal and a snack, but only snacks are required in part-day programs.	Partially
Site visits are required	Site visits conducted by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) are a required part of program monitoring process.	Yes
NIEER – TOTAL = 10		Pre-K Counts = 9+