



2009/10 Budget Message Points

What is Pre-K Today?

- 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.

Public Policy Goal

- Pre-K Today organized to support the creation of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in 2007. PA Pre-K Counts provides 3- and 4-year-olds at risk of school failure 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.

Description of Pennsylvania Pre K Counts

- The Pennsylvania Pre K Counts program, established by the Department of Education, makes high quality pre-kindergarten opportunities available to 3 and 4 year old children across the Commonwealth at risk of school failure, either because of income (300% of the federal 2009 poverty level, or a family of four earning \$66,150), language, cultural, or special needs issues.
- Fiscal year 2009-2010 level funded Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts at \$86.4 million, the same as fiscal year 2008-2009 enabling nearly 12,000 preschool children to voluntarily attend quality half- and full-day programs in schools, Head Start, child care centers and nursery schools.
- Funding is available to all Pennsylvania communities through an RFP process with priority given to school districts and other providers who serve children at-risk of education failure.
- All children in participating communities from age 3 until they enter kindergarten are eligible. Pennsylvania Pre K Counts supports the inclusion of children with diverse needs.
- All programs are voluntary and operate on a 180-day school calendar.
- Any school district, Head Start program, or nursery school that complies with pre-K program standards of State Board of Education may apply through the RFP process. Child care centers with a STAR 3 rating or above may also apply.
- The Pennsylvania Pre K Counts initiative builds on the work of the Pre K Counts Public-Private Partnership for Educational Success, a three-year project funded by leading Pennsylvania foundations and supported by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Pre-K in Pennsylvania Today

- In FY 2008-2009, nearly 12,000 3- and 4-year olds are participating in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. PA Pre-K Counts is serving children in 62 counties.
- More than 77% of children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts in the FY 2008-2009 school year were affected by two or more risk factors affecting their school readiness. Risk factors include: living in low income families, learning English as a second language, or having disabilities or developmental delays.
- Pennsylvania currently provides more than 60,000 3- and 4-year olds with high-quality pre-K through Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, public school pre-K, and federally and state supported Head Start. Unfortunately, just 20% of the Commonwealth's nearly 299,530 3- and 4-year olds have access to high quality, publicly funded pre-K.

Pre-K Creates Successful Students

Quality pre-K is proven to increase student success by building students' social, emotional, and cognitive development. Research has shown that children who attend high-quality pre-K enter school more prepared and achieve greater education success, including fewer grade retentions, less remediation, higher standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates.

- At the end of the 2008-2009 school year, nearly every child (99%) showed age-appropriate or emerging proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and social skills after attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program. Child outcomes for 2008-2009 are consistent with first year outcomes. In 2007-2008, 94% of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children finished the school year with age-appropriate or emerging age appropriate skills and behaviors.
- According to a recent study conducted in Pennsylvania, school districts investing in pre-K could recoup as much as 78% of their spending in pre-K in education savings. (Clive Belfield for the PA BUILD initiative: Invest Now or Pay More Later: Early Childhood Education Promises Savings to Pennsylvania School Districts. 2006.)
- In Pennsylvania, some small school districts with very high special education expenditures would recoup as much as \$1.16 for every dollar. (Clive Belfield for the PA BUILD initiative: Invest Now or Pay More Later: Early Childhood Education Promises Savings to Pennsylvania School Districts. 2006.)
- Children from the Early Childhood Initiative in Allegheny County – 4-year-olds already at severe risk of education failure – showed special education and grade retention rates below 2 percent when they got to school, in districts toppling 21 percent special education and retention rates. (UCLID Center at the University of Pittsburgh and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh: Allegheny County Early Childhood Initiative Evaluation, March 2002.)
- The national research demonstrates that children with quality pre-K experiences enter kindergarten with better reading, language, math, cognitive, and social skills than those without pre-K. (Peisner-Feinberg, Burhcin, Clifford, Culkin, Howes, Kagan, Yazejian, Byler, Rustici, and Zelazo. The Children of Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Go to School, 2000.)

Pre-K Creates Successful Communities

Successful communities require successful schools that help our children develop socially and intellectually from day one.

- Giving children the basic social, emotional, and academic tools improves all schools and communities.
- Children who learn how to learn very early are more likely to realize later academic and career success. America needs a 21st century education system that gives all children the tools to succeed in school, the workplace, and as active citizens.
- 90% of brain development occurs before age five; it is important to stimulate young minds as early as possible.
- Quality pre-K helps to prepare children for success in adulthood. Children who attend high quality early education programs are likelier to mature into responsible citizens – likelier to be married, with higher education attainment and better paying jobs. (Early Learning, Later Success: The Abecedarian Study. University of North Carolina. 1999.)
- The most recent cost benefit analysis of the "Perry Preschool Program" in Michigan has revealed that for every \$1 spent, an estimated \$16 was saved in lower public expenditures for welfare, education and other services. (Schweinhart, L.J.. The High Scope/Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions and Frequently Asked Questions. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Educational Foundation. 2005.)