



Pre-Kindergarten in Pennsylvania 2009 Fact Sheet

The need for high quality, pre-kindergarten programs

Each year, thousands of children enter Pennsylvania's kindergarten classrooms. Some will be ready to learn, but many others will not. School districts will spend hundreds of millions of dollars for remediation and special education costs on those "not ready" for school throughout their academic careers.

A substantial body of research on brain development has helped us understand how children's early experience from birth through five can significantly influence later cognitive, behavioral, educational, and economic outcomes for success in school and lifelong achievement. Environmental, financial, health and nutrition factors all can significantly influence a child's early development and school readiness - interrelated in complex ways regardless of background or income. Children in poverty, from single-parent homes, or who lack English proficiency, face additional risks.

Today, more than 75% of Pennsylvania's jobs require workers with education beyond high school. ⁽¹⁾ What happens or does not happen in early childhood can influence a lifetime of learning and earning for every child, regardless of background or income.

Why it matters?

- High-quality pre-K programs for 3- and 4-year olds give children better preparation for school and greater success in school.
- Children who attend high-quality pre-K programs enter kindergarten with better language, reading, math, and social skills. ⁽²⁾ They have fewer grade retentions, less remediation, higher standardized test scores, and higher graduation rates. ⁽³⁾
- According to a 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. Providing targeted preschool programs could reduce special education expenditures in the state by at least 8 percent annually (\$68 million). ⁽⁴⁾
- High-risk 4-year olds in Allegheny County's Early Childhood Initiative showed special education and grade retention rates of less than 1% and 2% respectively in districts where other students were referred for special education and retained at rates of 21% and 23% respectively. ⁽⁵⁾
- Numerous studies reveal the cost-benefit of high-quality pre-K. Recent analysis of the Perry Preschool Program in Michigan indicates that each dollar spent saved an estimated \$16 in reduced expenditures for education, welfare, criminal justice, and other public spending on Perry Preschool graduates through age 40. ⁽⁶⁾
- In June 2007, a study of the Abbott Preschool Program in New Jersey revealed that children who attend preschool for two years at both ages 3 and 4 significantly out-perform those who attend for only one year at 4 years of age or do not attend at all. ⁽⁷⁾

Where are we now?

- 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. ⁽⁸⁾
- More than 95% of children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts in the FY 2007-2009 school year were affected by at least one risk factor affecting their school readiness; more than 75% were affected by two or more risk factors. ⁽⁹⁾
- In its first year, FY 2007-2008, nearly 70% of children participating in PA Pre-K Counts showed age-appropriate skills and behaviors after attending the program. ⁽¹⁰⁾
- 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. ⁽¹¹⁾

What is the unmet need?

- At the start of the FY 2008-2009 school year, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts sites were reporting waiting lists of more than 3,000 children. ⁽¹²⁾
- Just 20% of the Commonwealth's 299,500 3- and 4- year olds have access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-K.
- Over 57% of our 3- and 4-year olds live in families with incomes below 300% of the federal poverty level. Just 35% of Pennsylvania's 3- and 4-year olds who live in families with incomes below 300% of the federal poverty level have access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-K.

Recommendations

Support the Governor's proposal to expand Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts to allow an additional 1,050 at-risk 3- and 4-year olds participation in this high-quality pre-kindergarten program.

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(3) National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000) *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

(4) Pennsylvania Build Initiative. (2006). Invest Now or Pay More Later: Early Childhood Education Promises Savings to Pennsylvania School Districts. Retrieved February 9, 2009 from www.teaching.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/BUILD_Report_III.Harvey.Feb061.pdf.

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(6) Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40. (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

(7) Frede, E., Kwanghee, J., Barnett, W. S., Lamy, C. E., Figueras, A. (2007). The Abbott Preschool Program longitudinal effects study (APPLES). National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Retrieved on February 9, 2009 from <http://nieer.org/resources/research/APPLES.pdf>.

(8) Email from Kelly Hoffman, Statistical Analyst Supervisor, Office of Child Development and Early Learning dated February 2, 2009.

(9) OCDEL. 2008. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts: End of Year Report 2007-2008. Harrisburg, PA: Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Retrieved February 9, 2009 from

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/PAPKC_year_end_report07_08_final.pdf.

(10) OCDEL.

(11) Based on public school pre-k enrollments 2007-2008, federal and state funded Head Start enrollment (12/08), and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts enrollment (12/08) – Response to data request in email from Kelly Hoffman, OCDEL dated 2/02/09.

(12) OCDEL.