

Why it matters? Benefits of pre-K and full-day kindergarten

Pre-K

- Children who enter kindergarten from high-quality pre-K have better reading, language and social skills than those who didn't go to preschool.
- Children who attended high-quality pre-K score higher on standardized tests such as the PSSAs than children who did not attend pre-K.
- 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.
 - *Districts such as Altoona Area, Allentown City and State College would recover about*

one-third of their spending on pre-K in savings in special education alone.

- *Some small school districts with very high special education expenditures would recoup as much as \$1.16 for every dollar invested in pre-K.*

Full-Day K

- Children in full-day kindergarten programs make more progress in literacy and math than those in half-day programs.
- Children who attend full-day K have lower retention rates and special education placements in the primary grades.

Where are we now? The status of pre-K and full-day K in PA

- The Commonwealth provides funding for pre-K and full-day K through the Education Accountability Block Grant (ABG) and a \$30 million appropriation to the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program.
- In 2005-06, 318 school districts are using more than \$117 million of ABG funds to serve 58,318 children in full-day K.
- Since the start of ABG, 183 school districts have begun offering full-day K including Muncy Area School District in Lycoming County and Brookville Area School District in

Jefferson County, and 24 districts have expanded existing full-day K programs.

- In 2005-06, 40 school districts used more than \$10 million of ABG funds to serve 3,052 children through pre-K.
- Since the start of ABG, 17 districts began to offer pre-K, including Manheim Township School District in Lancaster County, and 14 districts have expanded their pre-K efforts, including Harrisburg City School District in Dauphin County.

continued on back

What is the unmet need? How does PA compare to other states?

- Fifty-one percent of PA kindergarteners are enrolled in full-day K compared to 65 percent nationally.
- Current estimates show that only 19.4% of 4-year-olds are being served through Head Start or public school pre-K/K4 programs.
- Pennsylvania ranks 30th of 38 states that are publicly funding pre-K. Other states are eclipsing PA's approximately \$40M investment in pre-K: In 2004-05, NY spent more than \$246 million on pre-K programs; Illinois spent \$216 million; and, New Jersey led the pack with an appropriation of more than \$400 million. The Governor of Illinois' current budget proposal requests funding for universal pre-K.
- Pre-K is universally available on a voluntary basis in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. West Virginia is in the process of expanding access to all 4-year-olds whose families want them to participate.

PPC Recommendations

- Increase Accountability Block Grant by at least \$50 million.
- Increase the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program by \$15 million and take steps to assure that all new funding is spent for new pre-K slots.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) is a strong, effective, and trusted voice for improving the health, education, and well-being of the Commonwealth's children.

www.papartnerships.org

Funding for this report was made possible by the Annie E. Casey Foundation – KIDS COUNT project.

Citations

Information for this report came from the following sources:

American Journal of Education

Chicago Longitudinal Study

National Center for Early Education Research (NIEER)

National Research Council, *"From Neurons to Neighborhoods"*

Pennsylvania Build Initiative: *"Invest Now or Pay More Later,"* 2006

Pennsylvania Department of Education – Mid-Year ABG report

RAND Corporation and High/Scope Perry Preschool Project

University of North Carolina, *Early Learning, Later Success; The Abecedarian Study, 1999*