

Inside This Issue

Proposed State Budget has Positive and Negative Impacts for Kids.....	1
Early Childhood Action Day is Almost Here!	2
ECE Caucus Unites to Call for Early Childhood Investments	2
Help Stop Education Cuts	3
PDE Releases More Accurate Graduation Rate Data	3
Bill to Provide Schools with Federal Funds Moves in the House	3
PVAAS News: Reports Available Online, Senate Holds Briefing	4
PA Supreme Court Trains Attorneys Representing Children	4
Senate Package Would Relieve School Mandates	5
April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month	5
CHIP Enrollment/Revenue Update.....	5
FEDERAL UPDATE	
Congress Extends 2011 Spending to April 8	6
Corbett Asks Pitts-led Hearing for Medicaid Relief, but Children Would Feel Consequences.....	6
U.S. Education Budget Spends Smarter, Duncan Says	7
Employers Support ECE for Business Edge.....	8
Pew Study: Invest Now in Early Childhood or Pay Later.....	8

State Update

Proposed State Budget has Positive and Negative Impacts for Kids

State House and Senate members are prepared to begin state budget consideration this month. This is welcome news to early childhood education funding advocates as the Governor's proposed budget maintained current state funding levels for Head Start, Pre-K Counts, Keystone Stars and child care subsidy as well as included state funding increases for the Early Intervention programs. "We are grateful that Governor Corbett was able to protect precious funding for early childhood education in this budget environment," said PPC President & CEO, Joan L. Benso. "We look forward to working with the legislature in the coming weeks to support Governor Corbett's proposed funding levels for early learning."

PPC remains concerned, however, about the elimination of the Accountability Block Grant program, which provided 4,000 children with public school pre-K and almost 70 percent of kindergarteners with the opportunity to attend full-day K last year. "Like pre-K and child care, full-day kindergarten is a proven investment," Benso said. "Pennsylvania school districts with full-day kindergarten demonstrate a greater improvement in reading achievement than districts with part-day programs. Without ABG funding, full-day K will be on the chopping block in many school districts this spring."

[CLICK HERE](#) to send a letter to your legislator asking him or her to **Save Full-Day K!**



During Appropriations hearings last month, it was clear that legislators have a number of concerns about the level of proposed cuts in basic and higher education. Secretary of the Budget Charles Zogby, and Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis both sat through hours of questioning about the state budget proposal and its impact on children's education, taxpayers and the public education system.

Legislators raised significant concerns about the \$1 billion cut to basic education and how some were more adversely impacted by the cuts than

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others. Several lawmakers indicated that while they and their local school officials didn't expect the Corbett Administration to fill the hole left by the expiration of federal stimulus dollars, they also didn't plan for cuts beyond the loss of federal stimulus dollars. Both Zogby and Tomalis indicated the large cuts for both basic and higher education were triggered by Pennsylvania's \$4 billion deficit and the need to reduce state spending.

Early Childhood Action Day is Almost Here!

Join fellow children's advocates in Harrisburg April 12 to tell legislators how important early learning programs are to children, families, communities and the economy!

[CLICK HERE](#) to register for **Action Day**.

ECE Caucus Unites to Call for Early Childhood Investments

Members of the Early Childhood Education Caucus sent a message to policy-makers: Even though Pennsylvania faces a \$4 billion deficit, investments in high-quality early childhood education are essential to the state's future growth.

The Early Childhood Education Caucus is a bipartisan group of 88 lawmakers from the state House and Senate. At a Capitol news conference March 2, prior to the Governor's budget address, PPC and business leaders, law enforcement officials and parents joined more than a dozen Caucus members in reinforcing ECE's educational and economic benefits.

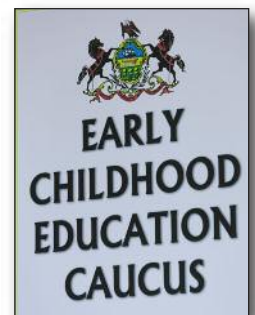
The state "must continue to commit itself to initiatives which are crucial to Pennsylvania's future growth and prosperity," even in light of fiscal troubles, said caucus Co-chair Sen. Pat Browne (R-Lehigh).

Every dollar invested in early childhood programs generates \$7 to \$16 in return, said Co-chair Rep. Phyllis Mundy (D-Luzerne). "Job creation means nothing if we don't have educated and qualified workers to fill jobs," she said.



PPC President and CEO Joan Benso said that lawmakers have made "great progress" in supporting ECE, and families now have access to a variety of early care programs, including Pre-K Counts, Keystone STARS and Head Start. But there's still "a long way to go," she said, noting that 80 percent of Pennsylvania 3- and 4-year olds still don't have access to publicly funded pre-kindergarten.

"Child care subsidies keep parents working, keep children safe, and help them learn," Benso said. "It's a win-win scenario for children, for parents and for employers."



[Back to Table of Contents](#)



Early learning promotes higher graduation rates, and pre-K investments are “an effective crime prevention tactic,” said Allentown Police Chief Roger MacLean, a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.

Lauren DeBord, mother of two children, said that child care subsidy helps both parents work full-time, secure in the knowledge that their children are cared for and learning.

“Affordable, accessible, quality child care is what is needed to keep many families going through these difficult times,” DeBord said.

Help Stop Education Cuts

Research-based educational programs that help students achieve, including pre-K, full-day kindergarten, tutoring for struggling students, and lower class sizes, are at risk of significant cuts in state funding. Join the PA School Funding Campaign, a coalition of 30 statewide and regional advocacy and education organizations that includes PPC, in protesting the proposed \$1 billion cut in basic education funding. [CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and sign a petition opposing the cuts.

PDE Releases More Accurate Graduation Rate Data

The Pennsylvania Department of Education released preliminary graduation rates for the class of 2010 in all school districts, public high schools, comprehensive Career and Technical Centers and charter schools using a new Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate calculation method. The information is posted at WWW.PDE.STATE.PA.US.

This new method of calculating graduation rates, which tracks individual students and accounts for students who transfer in and out of schools, more precisely measures the percentage of students who graduate from high school in four years based on the year in which they started ninth grade.

PDE’S former way of calculating graduation rates, known as the leaver rate, compared the number of students who graduate in a certain year with the number who have dropped out in each of the previous four years. The leaver rate calculation did not track students individually or account for students who transfer in or out of the school.

The new four-year cohort calculation usually results in a lower graduation rate than the old leaver rate.

Federal guidelines require that all states use graduation rates as one indicator in determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for school districts and high schools. Beginning in 2012, states will be required to calculate graduation rates utilizing the Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate method.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Bill to Provide Schools with Federal Funds Moves in the House

The House Appropriations Committee approved House Bill 915 April 4. This legislation would reduce the state investment for basic education in the current fiscal year and supplant those funds with \$387 million of federal Education Jobs money. These federal dollars were approved by Congress last summer, but were never appropriated by the legislature.

Secretary of the Budget Charles Zogby announced in January that Gov. Corbett would be placing \$337.8 million of basic education for FY 2010-11 in budgetary reserve to address the state’s fiscal deficit and asking the legislature to appropriate the Education Jobs money. This decision ensures that Pennsylvania does not lose the opportunity to utilize these additional federal dollars for education.





PVAAS News: Reports Available Online, Senate Holds Briefing

The Pennsylvania Department of Education has put Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS) reports online giving the public its first look at the system for statistical analysis of PSSA data.

PVAAS analyzes existing data in a new way to indicate the effectiveness of districts, local education agencies and schools in making academic progress with students. PVAAS data, available to school districts since 2008, help educators gauge the academic needs of cohorts and individual students.

“PVAAS is providing growth data to assist Pennsylvania to make data-informed decisions to raise student achievement, close achievement gaps, decrease student dropouts, and increase college readiness,” said PVAAS Statewide Project Director Kristen Lewald at a state Senate briefing.

PVAAS analysis could be done at the classroom and teacher level if data collection provided “accurate and complete linkage of every student to the teacher or teachers who have instructed the student in that subject area,” and if the state contracted for web-based reporting, said Lewald.

PDE is piloting a “multi-measure teacher evaluation tool” that could include student growth data, said Amy Morton, deputy secretary for elementary education. PPC serves on the 40-member Gates Momentum Workgroup that’s creating tools for better evaluating teacher effectiveness.

Achievement results from PSSAs and growth results from PVAAS combine for a more complete picture of student learning, according to PDE. Find PVAAS reports by [CLICKING HERE](#). Under school search, users can compare the progress of public schools and search for similar schools based on grade level tested, various school demographics, Intermediate Unit region, and county. Find PSSA results and Adequate Yearly Progress by [CLICKING HERE](#).

PA Supreme Court Trains Attorneys Representing Children

Attorneys statewide are getting training on the legal and emotional aspects of representing children and parents in dependency cases, under a new initiative from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

The effort is designed to give high-quality legal representation to children who may be abused or neglected. Currently, more than 90 percent of attorneys representing children and parents in dependency cases are part-time, and few counties offer targeted training, said Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Max Baer.

“We intend to fill the training void and ensure that our children, those often least capable of articulating their own interests before the court, and their parents, are receiving high-quality legal representation,” said Baer.

About 60 attorneys attended the first training in Harrisburg in March, and other sessions will be offered statewide this year. The training is part of the Supreme Court’s Permanency Practice Initiative, led by Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts’ Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) in partnership with the state Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Children, Youth and Families.

Recommendations from the PPC’s Porch Light Project, which seeks a *forever family for every child*, include quality legal representation are available by [CLICKING HERE](#).



[Back to Table of Contents](#)



Sign up to learn more about child welfare from the Porch Light Project by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Senate Package Would Relieve School Mandates

Sponsors of 18 state Senate bills say a new bill package would relieve school district mandates and expand flexibility for meeting the educational needs of students while state funding declines.

Sen. Jeff Piccola (R-Dauphin), chair of the Senate Education Committee, and Sen. Andy Dinniman (D-Chester), Democratic Education Committee chair, introduced the package at a Harrisburg news conference.

“Our goal is to reduce the numerous restrictions and directives currently hamstringing school districts so that learning environments can be improved for all students,” Piccola said.

Harrisburg must reduce “onerous, outdated and unnecessary restrictions that bog down our school districts and take the focus away from learning,” Dinniman said.

Among other things, the package includes legislation that would: provide alternative certification pathways for principals and teachers; allow economic furloughs and proportionate reductions in school administrators; repeal a requirement for school districts to use basic education funding increases for new research-based student achievement programs or the expansion of such existing programs; and eliminate continuing education and professional development for teachers for two years.

Similar bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives, and Gov. Corbett and his administration has consistently called for mandate relief since his budget address in March.

April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month

[CLICK HERE](#) to read our newest blog!



[Back to Table of Contents](#)

CHIP Enrollment

CHIP Enrollment remained steady in March at 192,852. There were 13,552 children enrolled in CHIP who would have not been eligible before the Cover All Kids initiative.



Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program

Revenue Update

Pennsylvania collected \$4 billion in General Fund revenue in March, which was \$10.5 million, or 0.3 percent, less than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$19.2 billion, which is \$232.7 million, or 1.2 percent, above estimate.

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Federal Update

Congress Extends 2011 Spending to April 8

Congress once again averted a government shutdown by extending spending until April 8. The extension cut spending by \$6 billion for the current fiscal year, on top of \$4 billion cut earlier this year.

The \$10 billion in cuts will save \$140 billion over 10 years, said Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ).

Discussions are continuing between the White House and congressional leaders to enact a spending plan to last through this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. However, House conservatives—particularly new freshmen members—want cuts of \$61 billion and have not indicated that they would accept less than that amount even if an agreement among leaders in the House and Senate was reached.

As this issue of *CapWatch* went to print, Speaker Boehner and Senate leaders were still trying to reach agreement on what the final cut number would be. An offer of \$33 billion was rejected by the Speaker as “not enough” and indicated that despite reports to the contrary, the Senate had not achieved an agreement with House Republicans on a budget deal—indicating that House Republicans want deeper cuts immediately.

Corbett Asks Pitts-led Hearing for Medicaid Relief, but Children Would Feel Consequences

Gov. Tom Corbett pleaded with a U.S. House subcommittee for flexibility in administering Medicaid and relief from pending Medicaid expansion.

Rep. Joe Pitts (R-PA) brought the Energy and Commerce health subcommittee that he chairs to Harrisburg March 23 for a hearing. The subcommittee is developing legislation that would allow states to slash their Medicaid rolls and use federal block grants as they see fit, Pitts said.

“We’re going to move to try to make mandatory spending discretionary,” Pitts said after the Capitol hearing.



The federal government’s Maintenance of Effort requirement prohibits states from cutting Medicaid enrollment before health care reform expands coverage to an additional 15 million people nationwide in 2014.

But Corbett, appearing before Pitts’ subcommittee, said that states need flexibility to provide better health care more cheaply.

“The states have been and continue to be the best places to decide what is best for its residents,” Corbett said. “States are the place where innovation takes place; we’re the laboratories. People often forget that the national child health insurance program, CHIP, is firmly based on an original Pennsylvania program.”

Medicaid consumes 30 percent of the state budget, and rising costs make the program unsustainable, testified Corbett and

[Back to Table of Contents](#)



Secretary of DPW, Gary Alexander, and Michael Consedine, PA Insurance Commissioner.

If Pennsylvania gets the relief that Corbett seeks, the state could decide to stop providing Medicaid to children under age one whose families have incomes above 133 percent of poverty, according to a PPC analysis. In CHIP, the state could cut eligibility, stop new enrollments, or even abolish the program, which currently serves about 193,000 children. In both programs, the state could shorten renewal periods to as little as three months and scrap mail-in and online renewal procedures in favor of face-to-face interviews.

Prospects for Pitts' plans to defund health care reform and ease Medicaid restrictions are unclear. Pitts said his subcommittee will work with other congressional panels that have jurisdiction. However, the U.S. Senate probably wouldn't pass any measure to gut health care reform.

U.S. Education Budget Spends Smarter, Duncan Says

President Barack Obama's education budget would promote reform, reward success and support state and local innovations while maintaining strong supports for at-risk students, U.S Education Secretary Arne Duncan testified to the Senate Budget Committee.

Priority areas in the budget, designed to reduce spending and increase efficiency, include early learning, sustaining K-12 reform momentum, and great teachers and leaders:

Early learning: The budget would create the \$350 million Early Learning Challenge Fund, a competitive grant program challenging states to establish model systems of high-quality early learning supports and services. The president has also proposed increases of \$866 million for Head Start and \$1.3 billion for quality child care.

Sustaining reform momentum: The budget would pump \$900 million into Race to the Top, which has "created powerful incentives for state and local leaders to make groundbreaking education reforms," Duncan said. Under the 2012 budget, funds would support district-level reform and emphasize cost-effective strategies that improve student achievement. Some funds would be designated for rural school districts to ensure their ability to compete for a fair share.

Great teachers and school leaders: The budget would support state and local reforms for recruiting, preparing, supporting, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and school leaders. One \$500 million allocation would support innovative teacher evaluation and compensation systems and other reforms to encourage effective teachers, principals, and school leadership teams to work in high-need schools. The budget also proposes

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

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\$250 million to expand high-quality traditional and alternative pathways into teaching in high-need (including rural) schools, subject areas, and fields.

The budget's remaining priority areas are college completion and full support for at-risk students and adults.

Employers Support ECE for Business Edge

American employers looking to fill a gap in the qualified staff needed to stay competitive have three choices: import the talent, export the job, or grow the talent here.

That's the dilemma posed by Lloyd Lamm, regional executive with the First National Bank of Pennsylvania, at a congressional briefing sponsored by the First Five Years Fund, a coalition of business leaders who support investments in early childhood education.

"I think we would all agree on the best of those three solutions: investing in human capital—the children of the U.S.—by growing the talent here," said Lamm. "It's the option that benefits not only our companies but our families, our communities, and our nation."

Rob Grunewald, economist with the Federal Reserve in Minneapolis, said that, "in terms of developing human capital, we get the highest return if we invest in children before they begin kindergarten."

See the briefing's webcast at WWW.FFYF.ORG.

Pew Study: Invest Now in Early Childhood or Pay Later

The future costs of failing to invest in early childhood are becoming even clearer, as evidence emerges that "expensive social ills" – child abuse and neglect, high school dropouts, crime, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and other health problems – could be diminished significantly through smart investments in research-based early childhood programs, according to the Pew Center on the States.

Pew's new report, "Paying Later: The High Cost of Failing to Invest in Young Children," reveals that the per-person cost of failing to invest in early childhood can range from \$30,000 to \$690,000.

"Failing to support programs that can prevent or alleviate adverse life outcomes represents an expensive missed opportunity," the report stated.

Programs proven in research must guide investments to yield benefits, researchers said. For instance, a \$9,000 "pay now" in Nurse-Family Partnership saves at least \$30,000 on health care, foster care, and other social services for an abused or neglected child. A \$1,000 investment in nutritional support for a pregnant woman can save \$10,000 on treating the health repercussions of low birth weight. Spending \$10,000 on quality pre-K prevents the \$250,000 "pay later" for a high school dropout's decreased contributions to society and increased reliance on public assistance.

Find the report by [CLICKING HERE](#).