



Partnerships

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Message from the President

Investing in Quality Early Education Makes a Difference in PA

We've come a long way in preparing our children for a brighter future by investing in quality early childhood programs that serve the diverse needs of families with children from birth to age 5. When Governor Rendell took office in 2003, he made early education investments a priority. In fact, over the past five years, the Commonwealth has increased investments for young people by more than \$700 million. But those investments need to be maintained as we work to prepare tomorrow's workforce – today's students.

Pennsylvania has made impressive progress over the years. More than 11,000 children receive a quality early education through Pre-K Counts. And the percentage of child care centers participating in Keystone STARS has doubled. But there is more to be done.

We must continue to build a quality early education continuum that serves the diverse needs of families and children. For instance, more than 16,000 children are on the Child Care Works waiting list as more and more parents are choosing quality child care than ever before. While we have moved from the bottom of states investing in pre-kindergarten, we still only have enough public investment to serve about one-third of the children eligible for Pre-K Counts.

We recognize that in tough economic times, legislators face difficult decisions when enacting a state budget. Governor Rendell introduced his budget that preserved funding for basic education and pre-K and upheld crucial funding for other early care and education (ECE) programs. However, a bill introduced in the Senate (S.B. 850) slashes critical programs like Pre-K Counts and Child Care Works along with



Joan L. Benso
President and CEO

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

investments in basic education, children's health, nurse-family partnerships and many other critical supports for children and families. This is not the right approach.

PPC is asking the legislature to support the governor's budget proposal that gives 1,050 more at-risk children access to high-quality pre-K through Pre-K Counts; funds Child Care Works so that 3,700 more children can be served; keeps the Keystone STARS quality improvement system whole, and maintains the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program at 2008-2009 funding levels.

The influx of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds gives us room to go even further in support for child care. ARRA prohibits states from using these funds to supplant state resources – meaning that we either use them to expand services or lose them. Therefore, we urge the General Assembly to build on the governor's proposals and reduce the Child Care Works waiting list by half in FY 2009-2010.

The old adage "all politics is local" rings even truer in tough budget times - legislators need to hear from their constituents to sort out local priorities. Your voice matters and even if you have been in touch with your local officials already, it is critical that you chime in again. Join our e-advocacy network to receive timely alerts on the state budget and how you can help protect early learning investments for our children. Sign up at www.papartnerships.org.

This issue of *Partnerships* will examine how far we have come in understanding and endorsing investments in early childhood programs, even in a sagging economy. Together, we can make sure our children are prepared for tomorrow.

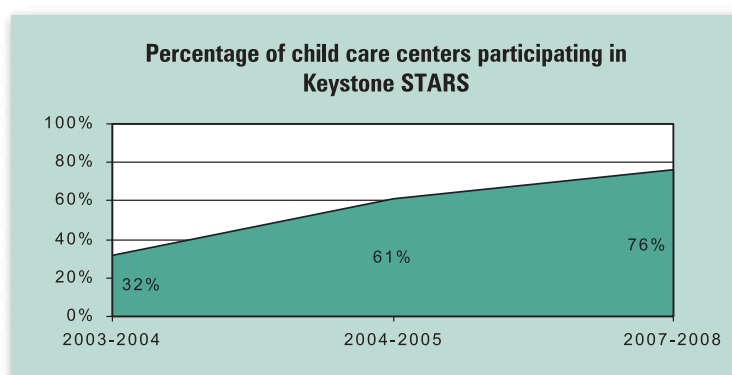
Early Care & Education in Pennsylvania: Progress Made, Challenges Remain

Every year, thousands of children enter pre-school, Head Start and child care. Some will be ready to learn, but unfortunately, others will not. Environmental, financial, health and nutrition factors all can significantly influence a child's early development and school readiness. The need for a competitive workforce in our global economy has brought early student achievement into the spotlight.

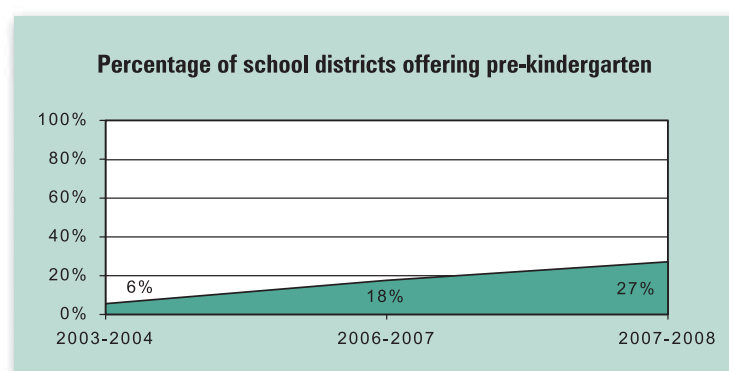
Pennsylvania has made great headway but we still have a long road to travel. We went from being one in nine states failing to support pre-kindergarten to operating one of the highest quality programs in the nation! Although our investment still only pays for one-third of children eligible for pre-kindergarten, we've made significant progress in the areas of quality and infrastructure for child care and other early learning programs. Pennsylvania was one of the first states to establish early learning standards from birth through third grade and commission a study that aligned all standards. The state also created an Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) that brings together the resources and expertise for early education – spanning across two state departments.

Program Highlights

- Pre-K is working for children in PA. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Annual Report for 2007-08 indicates that 70 percent of PA Pre-K Counts children finished the school year with age-appropriate skills and behavior.



Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare, 2007-08 Annual Report



Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare, 2007-08 Annual Report

- Since 2003, the number of child care centers participating in Keystone STARS has doubled. Nearly 80 percent of center-based programs are participating in STARS working hard to improve program quality.¹
- The percentage of school districts offering pre-kindergarten programs has more than tripled. Some school districts are using state Accountability Block Grant funds to create pre-K programs.²
- Since FY 2004/2005, the state Head Start Supplemental Assistance program has expanded service to Pennsylvania's most needy three, four, and five-year-olds making good use of a new state investment.³

Pennsylvania has made great progress in serving young children through early education initiatives such as Accountability Block Grants, Keystone STARS, Early Intervention, the Head Start Supplemental Assistance program, and PA Pre-K Counts, but our work is not done.

Program Challenges

- The waiting list for the Child Care Works program stands at more than 16,000. Families who wait for a child care subsidy face the likelihood that they will not be able to keep working or be forced to place their children in unsafe and unreliable environments while they work.
- Just 35 percent of Pennsylvania's three- and four-year-old children eligible for Pre-K Counts have access to that or any other high-quality publicly funded pre-K.

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Advocacy Plays Crucial Role in Early Care & Education Victories

Early care and education (ECE) programs must be viewed and treated as part of the continuum of lifelong learning. The quality of child care and other early learning programs is directly related to how clearly the needs of young children are understood and addressed.

Most recently, more than 500 ECE advocates from across the state convened on the state Capitol to urge the General Assembly to restore proposed cuts to the state budget passed by the Senate that would harm early learning programs. Hundreds more who could not attend in person participated in virtual advocacy day. As of the deadline of this newsletter, the budget is still being negotiated. However, its advocacy efforts like these that help to keep early learning programs at the forefront.

PPC's work on ECE issues continues to build off of our long-term leadership role in convening the ECE Advocacy Coalition to coordinate state budget and policy activities. This group includes regional and state-level advocacy and membership organizations from the fields of education, welfare rights, for-profit and nonprofit child care, youth development, parents, early intervention, Head Start, faith-based organizations, health, unions, law enforcement, and other advocacy organizations.

PPC first convened the ECE Advocates nearly six years ago following many years of participating in other child care coalitions and leading pre-K efforts. Initially, the work of the group focused on coordinating state budget strategy. Most notable is our work together in the *Pre-K Today* campaign that helped win Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in 2007. In the last two years, PPC's work has grown to include responding to state legislative and regulatory changes in child care, subsidy, teacher

certification, and pre-K standards, as well as federal issues affecting policy and funding of early care and education.

We need every voice speaking out to legislators and policymakers on an ongoing basis. Join our e-advocacy network to get timely and important updates that can help Pennsylvania's children.

The ECE Advocates Coalition includes Child Care Providers United, Community Justice Project, Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children, Early Care and Education Consortium, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Pennsylvania Academy of Pediatrics, Pennsylvania Child Care Association, Pennsylvania Afterschool/Youth Development Network, Pennsylvania Association for

the Education of Young Children, Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Pennsylvania Head Start Association, Pennsylvania Home-Based Child Care Providers Association, Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Organization, Pennsylvania Welfare Coalition, Public Citizens for Children and Youth, Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children, Quality Early Education through Salaries and Training (QUEST), Service Employees International Union - PA Council, United Way of Pennsylvania, United Way of Southeastern PA, United Way of Westmoreland County, and Generations United/Seniors For Children.

Foundations Play Crucial Role in ECE Successes

A driving force behind ECE advances in Pennsylvania is the long-term support of three regional foundations - the Heinz Endowments, the Grable Foundation and the William Penn Foundation. These foundations have used their resources to leverage public sector investments and build support among key stakeholders.

Investment strategies began well more than a decade ago in Pittsburgh when the Heinz Endowments along with other local funders engaged the business community and led the charge to build a high-quality early care and education system in Allegheny County. Their work was expanded to include Erie, Lancaster and York in the years that followed. Core operating principles included high-quality program components; evaluation to hone investments and refine programming; and diverse stakeholder engagement. Soon after the Pittsburgh efforts were launched, the William Penn Foundation began a similar

project in Philadelphia. The two regional foundations began to meet and compare notes and ultimately began to coordinate their strategies and engage other foundations to join in a leadership capacity. Such was the case with the Grable Foundation.

Grable, Heinz and William Penn invested in advocacy efforts beyond their home communities and provided the fuel for the state engine which would bring change. They funded groups like Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children and others to engage the former Ridge Administration in developing a more comprehensive ECE strategy and to build the case for ECE in the 2002 gubernatorial campaign. These investments produced results. The Ridge-Schweiker years ended with a task force and related report which provided the Rendell Administration a blueprint for a Pennsylvania early learning systems building. Both Governor Rendell and his 2002 opponent, Attorney General Mike Fisher,

committed to funding pre-kindergarten and improving other ECE investments.

When the Rendell Administration took office, the foundations seized the moment and used their resources to leverage public funds. This public-private partnership has been a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's early childhood system building efforts and continues to focus on advancing high quality programming; strong evaluation to determine outcomes and drive improvements; and, a commitment to a high quality early learning opportunity for every Pennsylvania child birth through age five.

During the same period, The Pew Charitable Trusts launched its national pre-kindergarten initiative which has financed and supported state based pre-K campaigns including Pennsylvania's *Pre-K Today* campaign which led the successful effort to enact Pre-K Counts in 2007.

Will you be a voice for me?

Will you help children like me get the quality early learning programs they deserve?

Join our e-advocacy network!

Visit www.papartnerships.org and click on the "Get Active" button to sign up for important updates on how you can help kids!

Children like me need your voice!



High-Quality Early Care & Education Works in PA

Research shows that quality early care and education can diminish the risks of school failure on young children and make sure that every child enters kindergarten ready to learn and succeed. As a Commonwealth, we must commit to supporting our youngest children to ensure that each reaches school academically, emotionally and socially prepared.

High-quality ECE programs are working in Pennsylvania:

- According to the 2006 Evaluation of Keystone STARS results, conducted by PSU professor Richard Fiene, Ph.D., Pennsylvania's quality rating system helps to improve child care quality. Keystone Stars is reversing the negative trend in child care quality that was evident in the 1990s.
- According to the PA Pre-K Counts Report for 2007-08, research conducted in Pennsylvania shows that quality pre-kindergarten:
 - o Reduces special education participation and grade retention;
 - o Improves children's readiness for school;
 - o Improves children's early school achievement; and
 - o Reduces need for speech-language therapy.

- According to a the 2006 *Invest Now or Pay More Later: Early Childhood Education Promises Savings to Pennsylvania School Districts* study conducted by the Pennsylvania Build Initiative, school districts investing in pre-K could recoup as much as 78 percent 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).
- Pre-K Counts standards score well on the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) rating scale for quality pre-kindergarten. Through small class sizes, educated teachers, appropriate curriculum and assessments, Pre-K Counts is producing results for students.
- According to the 2008 *Increasing State Investments in Early Care and Education* report by VOICES for America's Children, over the past five years, PA has increased investments by more than \$700 million in programs for young children – and those investments are yielding high results in child care and pre-K.

PA Legislators Stress Importance of Early Learning Programs



Keith McCall

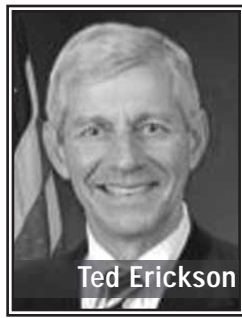
Speaker of the House Keith R. McCall, D-Carbon, and Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee Chairman Ted Erickson, R-Delaware, both recognize that early care and education (ECE) programs are important to our youngest and most vulnerable children. High-quality programs for young children also must

consider the health, social and emotional needs of the children they serve.

Research shows the benefits to the child include improved readiness to learn, improved early literacy, decreased need for remedial or special education placement, and improved cognitive development.

Even though research is proving that ECE programs do work, some programs are in danger of losing funding. One of those is Child Care Works. This program helps parents stay employed and provides a safe place for children to go while their parents are working. There is a statewide waiting list that has reached a record high of 16,000.

"Unfortunately, this year is unique and Pennsylvania faces a staggering budget deficit. The legislature is tasked with trying to provide quality services and programs to our constituents, all while trying to remain fiscally responsible and accountable," McCall said. "I believe that to rebound from our financial distress, and to guarantee the Commonwealth's health for years to come, we have to get people out to work. In order to facilitate getting people out to work, programs like Child Care Works are necessary to



Ted Erickson

ensure a safe place for children while parents are working hard to provide for their families."

Erickson also acknowledged that this is an extremely difficult budget year.

"Unfortunately, there are many competing demands in this year's budget," Erickson said.

"It's going to be difficult."

At one time, Pennsylvania was one of nine states that did not finance pre-kindergarten education programs in the nation. Now, Pennsylvania is a leader in quality early child care opportunities, McCall said.

"For every dollar we invest, we get a return of seven dollars back, and that's just what we get back as far as state services saved," McCall said.

What's more, Erickson said, is that with 700,000 children under the age of five in Pennsylvania, many are still not being served. "Pre-K centers are striving to be centers of excellence," he said. "But classrooms are getting full and some kids are being left behind. The legislature is tasked with trying to provide quality services and programs for children, all while trying to remain fiscally responsible and accountable."

And although the state has come a long way, more needs to be done. Both lawmakers agree that whoever becomes Pennsylvania's next governor, early care & education programs must remain a priority.

"ECE programs should be a point of focus for any Administration," Erickson said. "If we invest in ECE programs upfront, we save money in the long run."

Congressional Corner: Why ECE Matters



Allyson Schwartz

U.S. Representative Allyson Schwartz, D-Phila., and U.S. Representative Todd Platts, R-York, weigh in on why early learning is important for Pennsylvania children.

Q: Why does quality early learning matter?

Schwartz: High-quality early learning provides enormous benefits to children, families, and society. President Obama has made the expansion of high-quality early education programs a major pillar of his educational



Todd Platts

reform agenda and for good reason. Decades of research has proven that investing in high-quality early childhood development and education programs leads to higher high school graduation rates, lower need for special education, and lower rates of teen pregnancy, criminal activity, and dependence on public assistance programs. High-quality programs help prepare children, particularly low-income children,

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EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

PRE-K COUNTS – Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2007, provides quality half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten to 11,800 3-and 4-year-olds in Pennsylvania. The focus is on children who are at risk of academic failure due to income, special needs, language, or other issues.

KEYSTONE STARS – Started as a pilot program in 2002, Keystone STARS has been proven to improve the quality of child care through standards, training assistance, resources and support. The standards address staff qualifications and professional development, the early learning program, partnerships with family and community, and leadership and management. As of January 2009, almost 181,000 children were being served in the program.

HEAD START SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HSSAP) – Head Start began at the national level in 1965 to break the cycle of poverty by providing comprehensive early learning and family support services to young children. In 2004, Pennsylvania made it possible for more children to participate in this nationally-recognized program through HSSAP by providing supplemental funding to existing Head Start programs to extend the length of day or program year. More than 5,700 children were being served in the program as of January 2009.

T.E.A.C.H. SCHOLARSHIPS – T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) works with child care and Head Start programs, colleges and early childhood staff to offer scholarship programs and supports that improve the education and compensation of early childhood staff. In 2007-2008, 2,547 individuals received T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to 44 colleges and universities in PA. About 33 percent more scholarships were awarded from the previous year.

CHILD CARE WORKS – Child Care Works makes it possible for low-income families to find reliable child care and provides financial assistance to help them afford it. Working parents are eligible for assistance for child-care expenses if they meet incomes guidelines (less than \$40,000 for a family of four). The waiting list currently stands at 16,000 children but is poised to climb if funding needs this year are not met. There are more than 54,000 children receiving a child care subsidy.

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP – The Nurse-Family Partnership Program helps children and families reach their promise by giving first-time mothers supports through home visits by visiting nurses. Services are provided until age 2. The program currently is implemented in 40 counties. In 2007-2008, 4,194 families were served.

EARLY INTERVENTION – The Early Intervention Program serves children from birth to age five with disabilities/ developmental delays and their families. Early Intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in a child's early years and promotes collaboration among parents, service providers, early childhood educators and others involved in the child's life. Approximately 32,700 infants and toddlers and 45,000 preschoolers will receive Early Intervention Services in 2008-2009.

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Early Care in Pennsylvania *continued from page 1*

- The state must improve the education and retention of early childhood education teachers through a variety of mechanisms, including the expansion of the existing scholarship programs such as T.E.A.C.H. and the retention strategies in Keystone STARS.
- There is no comprehensive strategy to support early learning of infants and toddlers, however a committee has convened to begin inception of standards.

Children in 70 percent of PA's counties are at moderate to high risk of school failure.⁴ More than one-third of Pennsylvania's children under the age of five live in low-income families.⁵

"Pre-K Counts has had a very positive affect on our family," said Rochelle A. Murray, a mother of a five-year-old daughter enrolled in the Pre-K Counts program at the Kindercare Learning Center in Lancaster. "Our daughter will start kindergarten in the fall. We know she has the best foundation possible for her entrance into the world of elementary school. Pre-K Counts started her down the path of lifelong learning and her confidence is overflowing."

Harriet Dichter, deputy secretary for the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, acknowledges that with the economic crisis, it is important to maximize resources and coordination between programs. She says that while Pennsylvania has made significant strides, more needs to be done to maintain progress. One of those things includes increasing federal resources and leadership.

"The big picture is that more children are gaining access to these critical programs," Dichter said. "We are unique among states in that we have created a continuum of services that emphasize quality and standards."

Dichter says that OCDEL's goal is to maintain a seamless system of quality early education through strong program design, implementation with fidelity and effective coordination. This all needs to be accomplished while meeting the diverse needs of families, maximizing resources, and documenting positive impact as part of building accountability.

Before OCDEL originated, services were either inadequate to meet children's needs, unknown to parents, and/or difficult to access. Programs missed those most in need. Some services lapsed or had significant gaps, Dichter said. OCDEL creates a coordinated system that includes health (mental, physical and nutritional), child care, preschool, and early intervention for children with special needs. It also helps to blend existing funds and streamline services to increase the effectiveness of existing early learning programs.

Dichter said the future vision for OCDEL includes supporting continuous quality improvement throughout the early education continuum. One of those requirements, for instance, is that teachers have higher educational requirements.

In terms of child care, Dichter says it's important to increase funding for Child Care Works so that parents can stay employed and be active members of their communities. Research has shown that families with access to child care assistance are up to 15 percent more likely to be employed, stay off welfare, and have higher earnings.⁶

"Affordable and reliable child care can be the difference between self-sufficiency and improving a family's quality of life or depending on public assistance and supports just to make ends meet," Dichter said.

Regan Disotell, of State College, is a single mother of a 3-year-old son who knows all too well how vital child care funding can be to parents struggling financially. Her son has been on the Child Care Works waiting list for six months. The cost of child care for her son is \$700 a month, which is more than she makes. Disotell pays what she can, but realizes at any point she could be turned away because she can't afford the full fee.

"At that point, I would be forced to quit working. It's an uphill battle," Disotell said. "Every month I pay for child care, bills, food, insurance and other basic necessities. After that there is nothing left. It's hard to get ahead."

Congressional Corner *continued from page 3*

for a successful transition to kindergarten and elementary school, and is an investment that more than pays for itself.

Platts: I believe that it is important for every child to have access to high-quality early education opportunities. Investing in children during the earliest years of their lives builds their emotional and physical development and improves the economic productivity of our society. Numerous studies have shown that quality early childhood education prepares children to succeed in school and become better citizens.

I am proud to have joined with my colleague Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) in introducing the "Education Begins At Home Act." This bill would authorize state grants for the establishment or expansion of early childhood home visitation programs. Home visitation programs deliver parental education and family support services directly to parents with young children. Under these programs, parents are taught how best to support their children during their most formative years. Home visitation has been proven to prevent child abuse and neglect, reduce crime and violence in later years, and give new parents the tools they need to be better parents.

Q: Do you think a partnership should exist between the state and federal governments for pre-K and if so, how should it be shaped?

Platts: The federal government should work with state governments to ensure that all children have access to pre-K programs. While I believe the program should be administered by the state, the federal government can assist in providing funding for states to make quality pre-K programs available to more families. It is also important that pre-K programs coordinate with Head Start centers to ensure that both state and federal resources are being used most efficiently.

Schwartz: Pre-kindergarten is the most rapidly expanding segment of the educational system, but states need assistance in funding high-quality early childhood programs. This is a wise investment and one the federal government should make. That is why I am proud to be one of the lead sponsors of the Prepare All Kids Act, which will provide incentives for states to provide voluntary high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

Q: How do you propose to increase access to high-quality child care?

Schwartz: For children to benefit the most from their early care experiences, those experiences must be high-quality, whether it is in a pre-K setting, in home-based child care, or anywhere else. It is important that policymakers not only insist on high quality – such as by strengthening quality requirements like Congress did last session in the Head Start Reauthorization – but to also provide the necessary resources for child care providers to achieve high quality. On the state level, Keystone STARS is a great example of an initiative that recognizes the higher up-front cost for higher quality, and that also provides support for providers who wish to improve their quality. And on the federal level I will continue to work for policies that will increase access to high-quality early education.

Platts: The federal government should make investments in early education programs a funding priority. Unfortunately, many quality child care centers maintain lengthy wait lists. I will continue to advocate for increased funding for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as the Child Care and Development Block Grant, to expand access to underserved communities and families.

1 Investing in a Brighter Future Through Quality Early Learning: Annual Report, 2007 – 2008. PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning. P. 7.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Investing in a Brighter Future Through Quality Early Learning: Annual Report, 2007 – 2008. PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning. P. 6.

5 School Readiness in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2008.

6 Investing in a Brighter Future Through Quality Early Learning: Annual Report, 2007 – 2008. PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning. P. 25.

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