

# School Readiness in Pennsylvania

## School Readiness Indicators – 2008

### Making Good Use of Public Funds

Pennsylvania children continue to benefit from an aggressive state investment strategy in school readiness. Pre-K Counts was enacted into law in July 2007 with funding for nearly 11,000 children. More than 58,000 three- and four-year olds attended high quality pre-K programs this past school year funded by Pre-K Counts, Head Start and basic education funding. The recently enacted state budget included funding for another 800 children in pre-K. Now, more Pennsylvania children than ever before are starting kindergarten ready to learn.



#### Pre-K: Gaining Ground, Still a Long Way to Go

Research shows that children who start behind are likely to stay behind. Children who attend high-quality pre-K enter school more prepared and achieve greater academic success. While we have made great gains in preschool education, we are still leaving way too many children behind. When all the state and federal funds are added up, Pennsylvania has still only committed enough funding to serve 20% of our preschool children.

Children who enter school ready to learn continue on that pathway to success when they attend public schools that are adequately and equitably funded. But money alone isn't enough. Using those funds to support education strategies that improve student achievement and assuring that every child has a great teacher is key to helping children build on the gains they made in their preschool years.

#### Full-Day K Drives Education Achievement

Full-day kindergarten is one education strategy that help keeps kids on track. Children who attend full-day kindergarten do achieve more academically and demonstrate better behavior than those in half-day programs.

Over the last four years, full-day kindergarten enrollment has soared in Pennsylvania with more than 60% of children attending last school year. Funding from the state under the Education Accountability Block Grant drove these numbers up and the results are very positive. This past spring was the first year that third-grade students took our state assessments that benefited from the state's investment in full-day K. And what a difference full day-K made on their third-grade achievement: Schools with students attending full-day K improved their reading proficiency scores twice as much as schools where students attended part-day programs.

#### Investing in New School Funding Formula a Priority

While we are making great headway in Pennsylvania, we must be vigilant in our efforts and continue to invest in education strategies that will assure that every child enters school ready to learn and has the education experience he or she needs to reach his or her full potential. This will require the Governor and the PA General Assembly to continue the landmark work they began this summer when they passed an equitable and adequate school funding formula with common sense accountability. But, we have a long way to go to fully fund that formula – which was passed into law with the goal of full funding in six fiscal years.

A one-year investment amounts to a down-payment and not rock solid foundation for the educational achievement of every Pennsylvania child. To do that, we must stay true to the commitment made to Pennsylvania's children this summer and even in the difficult budget times as are likely in the coming year, keep true to our commitments and make payment on the next installment on that six-year plan a top government priority.



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Indicator	Significance	2007	2008	Change
<b>Ready Communities and Families</b>				
<b>Children Living in Low-Income Families</b> Children ages 0-4 who live in households earning less than 200% of the federal income poverty guidelines or \$40,000 for a family of four.	Children living in poverty are more likely to have poor nutrition, chronic health problems, be less prepared for and have more difficulty in school.	1 in 3	1 in 3	No Update Available from Data Source
<b>Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Degree</b> Of all births where education is known.	Children living with mothers with low education level are less likely to receive cognitive stimulation and high-quality child care and more likely to have diminished reading skills.	16.4%	16.2%	Made Improvement
<b>Child Abuse and Neglect — Reports</b> Number of reports of abuse and neglect for children 0 thru 4.	Children who have experienced abuse and neglect, or are in foster care placement, are more likely to perform poorly in school, have lower IQ scores, and have difficulty with language ability. They are likelier to have social, emotional and physical health problems.	4,617	4,845	Lost Ground
<b>Child Abuse and Neglect — Substantiated Cases</b> Substantiated cases of abuse and neglect for children 0 thru 4.		850	873	Lost Ground
<b>Children in Foster Care Placement</b> Ages 0-4.		5,060	4,988	Made Improvement
<b>English Not the Primary Language Spoken in the Home</b> Children ages 0-4 living in families where English is not the primary language spoken at home and English is not spoken very well.	Children living in homes where English is not the primary language spoken are more likely to enter school with lower math, reading and general knowledge assessments.	3.2	3.2	No Update Available from Data Source
<b>Ready Services – Health</b>				
<b>Children Lacking Health Insurance</b> Children 0-4 who are uninsured.	Children who are uninsured are less likely to access primary health care services that can prevent or address chronic or acute health conditions. Lack of health care or delays in treatment can negatively impact cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physical development. Uninsured children are more likely to miss school and have diminished academic achievement.	3.9	3.9	No Update Available from Data Source
<b>Children Funded by Public Health Insurance</b> Ages 0-4.		44.3%	44.8%	Made Improvement
<b>Children Born at Low Birth Weight</b> Babies born weighing under 2,500 grams.	Babies born at low birth weight are likelier to die in the first year of life, have disabilities and health problems that can include developmental delays, visual and hearing impairments and chronic respiratory ailments. They may have trouble with social skills and show higher rates of depression, anxiety disorders, physical disabilities and hyperactivity and aggression.	8.3%	8.5%	Lost Ground
<b>Ready Services – Early Care and Education</b>				
<b>Early Intervention</b> Children birth to the age they begin school enrolled in the state's early intervention program.	Early Intervention is designed to assist children with developmental delays or disabilities before they enter school by working with their parents, caregivers and communities to build on the child's strengths and maximize their experiences and opportunities. Early Intervention services help improve children's school readiness.	66,160	69,325	Made Improvement
<b>Total Public Funded Pre-Kindergarten</b> % of children 3 and 4 enrolled in public school pre-K, Head Start or PA Pre-K Counts.	High-quality pre-K helps improve the school readiness of young children by enhancing their social, emotional and cognitive development. Children who attend high-quality pre-K enter school more prepared and achieve greater success, including fewer grade retentions, less special education placement and higher standardized test scores.	16.3%	20.1%	Made Improvement
<b>High-Quality Child Care</b> Availability of high-quality child care (NAEYC, NAFCC, NAA or NECPA accredited or Keystone Stars 4) for children 0-4 in need of child care services.	Children who receive high-quality child care show better literacy skills and score higher on tests of both cognitive and social skills than children cared for in other arrangements. High-quality early care and education programs have demonstrated a strong return on investment.	3.1%	3.3%	Made Improvement
<b>Access to Child Care Subsidy</b> Number of slots for infants, toddlers and preschool children in the state's subsidized child care system.	The availability of child care subsidies to low-income families increases the opportunity for them to access high-quality care for their children enhancing their school readiness and increasing the likelihood that parents remain employed.	47,549	54,166	Made Improvement
<b>Ready Schools</b>				
<b>Full-day Kindergarten</b> % of kindergarteners in district and charter schools who attend full-day programs.	Students who attend full-day kindergarten score higher on achievement tests, receive better report cards, experience fewer grade retentions, require less remediation and special education, are more involved in learning, and are better behaved than students in half-day programs. These students make more successful transitions to first grade.	56.7%	62.3%	Made Improvement
<b>3rd Grade Math PSSA</b> % of third graders in school districts and charter schools scoring below proficient on the PSSA exam in math.	Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, 100 percent of all students must be Proficient or Advanced on state tests by 2014. These test results are not indicators of school readiness per se, but rather, markers of how effective school readiness and early education efforts have been at bringing children to academic success.	21.5%	19.5%	Made Improvement
<b>3rd Grade Reading PSSA</b> % of third graders in school districts and charter schools scoring below proficient on the PSSA exam in reading.		27.2%	23.1%	Made Improvement