



# Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Joan L. Benso  
President & CEO

116 Pine Street, Suite 430  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
[www.papartnerships.org](http://www.papartnerships.org)

David W. Sweet, Esq.  
Board Chairman

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: Kathy Geller Myers  
717-236-5680; 717-903-3716 (mobile)  
[kgmyers@papartnerships.org](mailto:kgmyers@papartnerships.org)

### **Early Education Program Growth + Waiting Lists = Mixed Results**

*PA Partnerships for Children Releases 2009 School Readiness Report  
State has gained ground but still long way to go for all kids to be ready*

**(HARRISBURG), Oct. 7, 2009** – Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC) today released its annual report on School Readiness in Pennsylvania showing steady growth in early education programs including pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten. The state also has improved on child well-being indicators including births to mothers with less than a high school degree and babies born at low birth weight. Yet greater reliance on public programs including child care subsidy and health coverage points to an escalation of families turning to the government for help in lean economic times.

Full-day kindergarten enrollment grew seven percent from 2008 to 2009 to its current level of nearly 66 percent. And the expansion in pre-K is a strong sign of the state's continuing commitment to early education. When public resources are made available to improve achievement, public schools and other programs are taking advantage and it is making a difference. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, nearly every child (99 percent) showed age-appropriate or emerging age-appropriate proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and social skills after attending a PA Pre-K Counts program in the 2008/09 school year.

Yet only 17 percent of all 3-and 4-year-olds in the Commonwealth had access to publicly-funded pre-K. And the waiting list for child care subsidy ballooned to an all-time high this year: 16,000 kids found themselves on the waiting list for Child Care Works, which helps low-income working parents work by providing a subsidy for child care. This year's School Readiness Report shows that funding for child care subsidy is failing to keep pace with demand.

A plus on the child care front is that the state has reduced its reliance on unregulated care by more than 11 percent, signifying that more children are being served in safer, more reliable, regulated programs.

"Pennsylvania has remained consistent in growing its investments in early education programs that make a difference in a child's life," said Joan L. Benso, president and CEO, PA Partnerships for Children. "But at the same time more growth is needed to keep up with the demand for programs and services."

ADD-1

The report, designed to give policymakers and community leaders the information they need to track the outcomes of their investments and to target resources for the future, shows an increase in the number of children who now have coverage through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medical Assistance (MA). While it's reassuring that more children have a safety net and are not without health insurance, more kids needing insurance is indicative of the increase in unemployed or benefit-less parents needing coverage for their children.

"It's clear Pennsylvania has made important steps forward to assure that all our children enter school ready to learn and prepared to succeed, but we still have a long way to go to achieve this goal for every child," Benso said.

More information is available online at [www.papartnerships.org/sr2009](http://www.papartnerships.org/sr2009) or by contacting Kathy Geller Myers, PPC Communications Director, at 717-236-5680; 717-903-3716 (cell).

###