

Early Childhood Education

A quality early childhood education does matter. In Pennsylvania, we recognize that quality early learning opportunities provide children with a leading edge in their academic achievement and future career success in a globally competitive workforce, while providing critical support to families. A well-educated workforce is essential for our nation's and our commonwealth's economic recovery and growth. A recent study found if high quality pre-kindergarten were made available to all children in Pennsylvania, the number of students requiring special education services in kindergarten and the early grades could be reduced by 2,380, saving Pennsylvania taxpayers \$102 million in special education costs.

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) unites the departments of Education and Public Welfare to enhance educational opportunities for Pennsylvania's youngest children and create a quality early education continuum.

Pennsylvania has moved to the head of class in early childhood learning

Since 2003, Pennsylvania has moved from being one of nine states to offer no publicly-funded pre-kindergarten to one of the nation's leaders in early education. Pennsylvania is among the first states to:

- Establish learning standards for early childhood from birth through third grade and commission an independent study to ensure alignment of all standards;
- Establish a state-funded quality pre-kindergarten system that includes both school-based and community-based early education programs (Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts);
- Create a cohesive Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) that brings together the resources and expertise for early education, spanning across state agencies; and
- Develop a common set of child outcomes assessments for all state-funded early learning programs and a system to report outcomes (Early Learning Network).

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts - Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is the commonwealth's hallmark program to provide high quality pre-kindergarten services to at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds so that they can enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed in school and in life. Governor Rendell's 2010-11 budget calls for \$85.9 million in Pre-K Counts funding to serve 11,800 children.

Early Intervention - Early Intervention serves children from birth to age five with disabilities/developmental delays and their families. The 2010-11 proposed budget calls for an additional 2,401 children from birth through age 5 to be served, for a total of nearly 81,700 children.

Head Start Supplemental Assistance – Supplemental state funding for federally funded Head Start programs provides comprehensive early learning services to children and families who are most at risk of academic failure. Governor Rendell's 2010-11 budget provides \$38.7 million in Head Start supplemental assistance to serve 5,743 children.

Accountability Block Grants – Governor Rendell's 2010-11 budget provides \$271.4 million in Accountability Block Grants so that schools can continue to invest in education programs that are proven to help children learn. In 2009-10, about two-thirds of these grants went towards initiatives that helped districts establish, maintain or expand full-day kindergarten. In all, districts opted to use about \$3 of every \$4 in Accountability Block Grants for early childhood education efforts including high-quality pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and class-size reduction in kindergarten through third grade.

For more information, please visit www.education.state.pa.us.