

# June 2009: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Boosts Child Learning Outcomes



For A Brighter Future

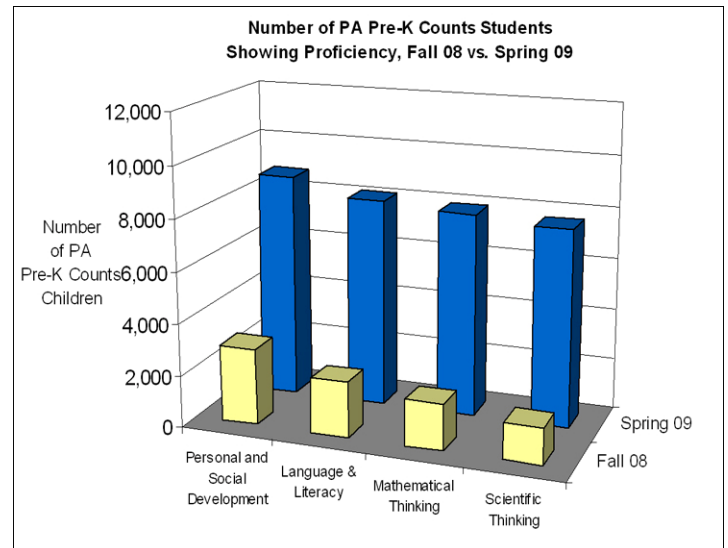
Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides high quality pre-kindergarten services to 11,800 3 & 4 year olds in the commonwealth so that they can enter school ready to learn and succeed in school and in life. Second year outcomes are showing that last year's PA Pre-K Counts graduates are succeeding in kindergarten and this year's students have made remarkable progress during the school year.

**Nearly every child (99 percent) showed age-appropriate or emerging age-appropriate proficiency in literacy, numeracy, and social skills after attending the PA Pre-K Counts program.**

**Nearly 75 percent of children who attended Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts finished the school year with age-appropriate proficiency in literacy, numeracy and social skills.**

By the end of the year:

- Nearly three times as many children were proficient in **Personal and Social Development** (from 2,984 children upon entry to 8,763 at end of year)
- Nearly four times as many children were proficient in **Language and Literacy** (from 2,164 children upon entry to 8,135 at end of year)
- More than four times as many children were proficient in **Mathematical Thinking** (from 1,792 children upon entry to 7,910 at end of year)
- Five times as many children were proficient in **Scientific Thinking** (from 1,429 children upon entry to 7,686 at end of year)



**Progress was made in closing achievement gaps for English Language Learners and children with developmental delays or disabilities.**

Spanish-speaking children were three times more likely than English-speaking children to begin the year without age-expected language and literacy skills. By the end of the year, Spanish-speaking children participating in PA Pre-K Counts had closed the gap—both groups finished the year with less than 2% of children still without age-expected language skills.

Among students with developmental delays or disabilities, there was an 83 percent decrease in the number of children without age-expected skills in language and literacy by the end of the school year.

**Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is helping children make progress with consistently high quality.**

Child outcomes for 2008-2009 are consistent with first-year outcomes. In 2007-2008, 94 percent of PA Pre-K Counts children finished the school year with age-appropriate or emerging age-appropriate skills and behaviors. Nearly 70 percent showed age-appropriate skills and behaviors after attending the PA Pre-K Counts program.

*When the program was first established, I was a bit skeptical. But now, after talking to our kindergarten teachers, visiting the Pre-K Counts classrooms and seeing what is taking place there, I am a believer. The skills that PA Pre-K Counts students come to kindergarten with have them leaps and bounds ahead of others [who] have not had that experience, whether at pre-k or at home. This allows the teachers to enrich the lessons they present and challenge their students more.*

Todd Lape, Hasson Heights Elementary School Principal, Oil City Area School District, Venango County

## **PA Pre-K Counts graduates are excelling in Kindergarten**

School Districts report that PA Pre-K Counts children entered kindergarten with age-appropriate skills, were more prepared for kindergarten than their peers, and are meeting development expectations throughout kindergarten.

## **PA Pre-K Counts is reducing the need for special education services**

Children with developmental delays who participated in PA Pre-K Counts in 2007-2008 were able to make significant developmental progress to enter kindergarten on par with national norms. Some school districts report:

- Many children who entered PA Pre-K Counts in 2007-2008 with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) requiring Early Intervention services no longer required services when they entered kindergarten in 2008-2009.
- Of those children who participated in PA Pre-K Counts last year, a smaller percentage required Early Intervention services in kindergarten than among the total kindergarten population.

## **PA Pre-K Counts is getting parents involved in their children's early learning**

A state-wide sample of 200 parents whose children are participating in PA Pre-K Counts reported overall high satisfaction with the program and that PA Pre-K Counts was meeting their expectations and their child's needs.

*PA Pre-K Counts helps reinforce things that are being done at home. My daughter and I love the alphabet and the letter of the week. When there is a trip or outing, parents are welcomed. This gives me the opportunity to see how my child interacts with her classmates and how well she responds to her teachers. PA Pre-K Counts benefits the child as well as the adults and I sometimes find myself talking to her teachers and "comparing notes."*

Jamie Alexander, parent, Crispus Attucks, York County

## **Fewer than 4% of Pennsylvania's preschoolers participate in PA Pre-K Counts**

In 2008-2009, fewer than four percent of Pennsylvania's 3 and 4 year olds participate in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Participation rates are slightly higher (approximately six percent) in counties that are at moderate-high to high risk of school failure<sup>1</sup>. According to grantee reports, nearly 95 percent of children participating in PA Pre-K Counts are affected by at least one risk factor for school failure, with 75 percent affected by more than one risk factor. Often children who are affected by risk factors, such as living in low-income families or being English language learners, enter school without all the academic and social skills they need to succeed. Although all children benefit from quality pre-kindergarten, research has shown that at-risk children benefit the most, and can often catch up with their peers developmentally by the end of the pre-kindergarten year.

*Participating in the PA Pre-K Counts program has been a great learning experience for our daughter. She has learned English as a second language and improved her social and interpersonal skills in a friendly and caring environment. We believe the solid foundation that the PA Pre-K Counts program has built for our daughter will help her transition into kindergarten smoothly.*

Parent, Warwick Child Care Center, Chester County

## **Quality program design and accountability is providing positive results for children**

Comprehensive accountability includes a system of reporting, site monitoring and classroom environment ratings. Grantees submit monthly and quarterly reports which are reviewed by OCDEL staff. Preschool Program Specialists conduct site visits and evaluate each grantee on how well it has met program requirements for reporting, communications/interactions, meeting and training attendance, continuous quality improvement, teacher qualifications, funds management, classroom environment, enrollment and attendance of the children, and program review. Independent assessors also evaluate individual classrooms using the nationally recognized Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ECERS-R). Grantees also submit periodic reports of each child's progress.

## **Providing a quality early education continuum**

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is part of a quality early education continuum serving children from birth to age five and their families to prepare Pennsylvania's children for success in school and in life. It is the combination of programs such as Keystone STARS, Child Care Works, Head Start, Early Intervention, Full-Day Kindergarten and Nurse-Family Partnership that provides the most effective results. For more information, visit [www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us).

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<sup>1</sup> Risk level reflects to what extent children are at risk of school failure in that county, based on OCDEL's Program Reach and County Risk Assessment, FY 2007-2008.