

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and  
Head Start Supplemental  
Assistance Program  
Report on Program Operations

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

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# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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## **Introduction**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) supports two high-quality early childhood education programs that provide instruction to low-income preschool children while preparing them for kindergarten entry: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program. State law requires the PDE to provide the General Assembly with an annual report detailing the operations of both Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance programs.

### ***Pennsylvania Pre-Counts Program***

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts supports high-quality pre-kindergarten education for children ages three through entry into kindergarten for families earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines. In 2022-23, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding made it possible for 26,477 children to enroll at 992 provider locations statewide.

Grants are awarded to approved providers on a per slot basis. Act 54 of 2022 set the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts reimbursement rates for 2022-23 at \$10,000 per full day slot and \$5,000 per half day slot. The 2022-23 enacted state budget allocated \$302,284,000 for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program – a \$60 million increase from fiscal year 2021-22. The additional funds were used to support a per slot increase for providers and increase the total number of slots by nearly 3,000.

### ***Pennsylvania's Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program***

Head Start is a federal program that supports child development from birth to age five through services focused on early learning, health, and family well-being. In addition to educational programming, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, social service support, and a strong parent/family involvement component. Eligible preschool children are those who live in families earning up to 100 percent of the federal poverty level, and those who are identified as foster children or experiencing homelessness.

Pennsylvania's Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program provides Head Start preschool programs with state funding to enroll additional children and/or expand full day and full year service opportunities. In 2022-23, the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program supported 6,555 Pennsylvania children in 41 Head Start locations statewide.

The 2022-23 enacted state budget allocated \$88,178,000 for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program. The per slot reimbursement rate is set annually as part of the contracting process with approved providers.

### ***Impact of the Pandemic***

During 2022-23, Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program were expected to return to full, in-person instruction and to maintain full enrollment; however, providers were allowed continued flexibility in instructional design. Additional details can be found in Appendices A, E, and J.

## Providing High-Quality Services to Young Children and Families

All children should begin school ready to learn and succeed. Research indicates what is widely known—all children can tap into their innate potential to learn when they receive high-quality instruction that takes into consideration phases of brain development. Early childhood education is a proven strategy that ensures a child’s readiness for school success.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs meet or exceed most quality standards recommended by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

**Table 1: Comparison of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Standards to NIEER Standards and Benchmarks**

NIEER Quality Standard	NIEER Benchmark	Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Standards	Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Standards
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Comprehensive
Curriculum Supports	Approval process and supports	Approval process	Approval process
Teacher degree	Bachelor’s degree	Bachelor’s degree + ECE Certification	Half of lead teachers must have a bachelor’s degree
Teacher specialized training	Specializing in Pre-K	ECE certification	Specializing in child development
Assistant teacher degree	Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent	CDA or equivalent	CDA
Staff professional development	At least 15 hours a year; individual professional development plans; coaching	Meet requirements of Act 48 (180 hours over five years)	At least 15 hours a year; coaching
Maximum class size	20 or less	20 or less	3-year-olds – 17 or less 4-year-olds – 20 or less

<b>NIEER Quality Standard</b>	<b>NIEER Benchmark</b>	<b>Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Standards</b>	<b>Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program Standards</b>
Staff-child ratio	1 staff per 10 children (1:10)	1 teacher and 1 aide per 20 children (1:10)	3-year-olds – 2:17 or less (classrooms must always have two paid staff)  4-year-olds – 2:20 or less (classrooms must always have two paid staff)
Screening & referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral	Vision, hearing, health, and referral
Continuous quality improvement system	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement

## **Assessments Used to Measure Academic Performance**

In Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program classrooms, teachers are required to assess the progress of students. Teachers are most qualified to perform the assessment since they observe children in authentic environments and are familiar with each child's development and learning expectations.

The goal of early childhood assessment in Pennsylvania is to:

- Adapt instruction to meet individualized student and group needs;
- Understand the status of children across a broad range of cognitive and non-cognitive domains;
- Track achievement and developmental gains over time; and
- Inform policy by providing student outcomes in classrooms and across the state.

Program guidelines emphasize that providers should not use child outcome data to determine placement in a program, class or special education, or to deny or exclude access to services for those children who are age eligible.

All providers report child outcomes within an approved on-line assessment system. Providers select from the following approved on-line child assessment tools to report child outcomes:

- Assessment Technology Incorporated: Galileo®
- Cognitive ToyBox, Inc.
- Desired Results Developmental Profile
- Experience Early Learning, home of Mother Goose Time
- Frog Street AIM Observational Assessment
- HighScope: COR Advantage
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Riverside Early Assessments of Learning (REAL) Kindergarten Readiness
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: REAL Head Start\*
- LifeCubby: The Vine Assessment™
- NIEER/Early Learning Scale
- Pearson: THE WORK SAMPLING SYSTEM®
- Pearson: THE WORK SAMPLING SYSTEM® for Head Start
- My IGDIs™: Profile of Preschool Learning and Development Readiness (ProLADR)
- Teaching Strategies LLC: Teaching Strategies GOLD®

## **Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts**

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides high-quality pre-kindergarten education for low-income eligible children. An eligible child is defined as a child who is at least 3 years of age but is younger than kindergarten entry and lives in a family earning up to 300 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines (\$83,250 for family of four in 2022-23). In 2022-23, 293 lead agencies at 992 locations served 26,477 children through Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

### **Application Process**

PDE competitively awards grants annually based on the amount of funding allocated by the General Assembly. Grants are awarded for one year, with an established number of subsequent years of continuation grants contingent upon available funding. The grant application and guidelines are publicly posted on the PDE website. Applicants apply through the eGrants system. See Appendices B and C for additional detail.

### **Eligible Providers**

The following entities may operate Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms:

- School districts;
- Licensed nursery schools;
- Head Start grantees; and
- Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes that maintain a STAR 3 or STAR 4 rating under the Keystone STARS Program.

An eligible provider may apply for a grant alone or in combination with other eligible providers as a joint applicant, in which case the entity that applies shall be the lead agency in a partnership.

### **2022-23 Grant Awards**

PDE awards Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program grants to approved providers on a per-slot basis. Full-day slots require a minimum of five hours per day of instructional services for at least 180 days per year. Half-day slots require a minimum of 2.5 hours per day of instructional activities for at least 180 days per year. As part of the 2022-23 budget process, the General Assembly set the reimbursement rate at \$10,000 per full-day slot and \$5,000 for each half-day slot.

In 2022-23, PDE awarded a total of \$297,780,012 to approved Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers.



## **Allowable Uses of Grant Funds**

Providers may use grant funds for costs associated with providing program services to eligible students enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and are issued a [Fiscal Supplement](#) to assist in developing program budgets. Funds may not be used for local administrative or indirect costs. See Appendix A for more information on program guidance.

## **Approved Providers and Enrollments**

The list of 2022-23 approved Pre-K Counts program providers can be found in Appendix G.

## **Enrollment Goals**

Per program guidance and to maintain consistency with Head Start requirements, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers are expected to maintain at least 90% enrollment throughout the year. Children are considered enrolled when an intake meeting between the parent or legal guardian and the Pre-K Counts provider has been completed, the necessary information has been gathered, and the child has been identified as a candidate for a Pennsylvania Pre-K slot. When a child withdraws from the program, providers have 20 instructional days to fill the vacant slot. Maintaining waiting lists at the provider level assists in filling vacant slots as soon as possible. Grantees are required to report enrollment in Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN), the department's early learning data system.

## **Pennsylvania Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program**

Head Start is a federal program that supports child development from birth to age five through services focused on early learning, health, and family well-being. In addition to educational programming, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, social service support, and a strong parent/family involvement component. Eligible preschool children are those who live in families earning up to 100 percent of the federal poverty level, and those who are identified as foster children or experiencing homelessness.

Pennsylvania's Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program provides Head Start preschool programs with state funding to enroll additional children and/or expand full day and full year service opportunities. In 2022-23, the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program supported 6,555 Pennsylvania children in 41 Head Start locations statewide.

Providers that are approved for Pennsylvania's Head Start Supplemental Assistance funding are existing federal Head Start grantees and must follow the federally-approved program models, which includes both classroom and home visiting experiences. Each provider determines the model that best meets the needs of their local community.

### **2022-23 Grant Awards**

In 2022-23, PDE awarded a total of \$87,372,546 to approved providers.

Information about the 2022-23 award process is found in the following appendices:

- Appendix D contains the 2022-23 Head Start Supplemental Assistance competitive rebid grant application; and
- Appendix H includes information on the grant applicants, grant scores, and funding allocations.

### **Allowable Uses of Grant Funds**

Providers are permitted to use grant funds for costs associated with providing program services to eligible students enrolled in the Head Start Supplemental Assistance program and are provided a [Fiscal Supplement](#) to assist in developing program budgets. Funds may not be used for administrative or indirect costs.

### **Approved Providers and Enrollments**

See Appendix I for the list of 2022-23 approved Head Start Supplemental Assistance program providers.

### **Enrollment Goals**

Per state law, Head Start Supplemental Assistance providers are expected to maintain at least 90% enrollment throughout the year. Per federal Head Start regulations, providers have 30 days to fill slot vacancies. At the beginning of each year, a program must develop and maintain a wait list to assist with filling vacant slots as soon as possible. Grantees report their enrollments in PELICAN.

**Table 2: Full and Half Day Enrollment for Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs, 2022-23**

Location County	Sum of Number of Full Day Slots Funded	Sum of Number of Half Day Slots Funded	Total Funded Slots	Total Enrolled Slots	Unfilled Seats	Enrollment Percentage
Adams	107	20	127	81	46	64%
Allegheny	1982	93	2075	1818	257	88%
Armstrong	118	20	138	125	13	91%
Beaver	363	20	383	342	41	89%
Bedford	110	20	130	120	10	92%
Berks	924	0	924	779	145	84%
Blair	389	55	444	409	35	92%
Bradford	285	102	387	374	13	97%
Bucks	813	6	819	760	59	93%
Butler	165	20	185	157	28	85%
Cambria	367	0	367	341	26	93%
Carbon	135	80	215	186	29	87%
Centre	217	34	251	209	42	83%
Chester	769	3	772	562	210	73%
Clarion	153	14	167	154	13	92%
Clearfield	173	16	189	177	12	94%
Clinton	76	36	112	92	20	82%
Crawford	310	62	372	366	6	98%
Dauphin	768	0	768	625	143	81%
Delaware	871	0	871	847	24	97%
Erie	755	257	1012	954	58	94%
Fayette	330	20	350	337	13	96%
Franklin	402	0	402	353	49	88%
Huntingdon	110	0	110	108	2	98%
Indiana	243	24	267	240	27	90%
Jefferson	129	0	129	120	9	93%
Lackawanna	349	0	349	319	30	91%
Lancaster	1109	80	1189	1047	142	88%
Lawrence	330	0	330	298	32	90%
Lehigh	856	1	857	859	-2	100%
Luzerne	906	53	959	880	79	92%
Lycoming	214	36	250	204	46	82%
Mercer	162	0	162	162	0	100%
Mifflin	116	4	120	117	3	98%
Monroe	262	18	280	276	4	99%
Montgomery	959	14	973	840	133	86%
Montour	58	0	58	58	0	100%
Northampton	636	0	636	564	72	89%
Northumberland	196	0	196	196	0	100%
Philadelphia	5010	68	5078	3872	1206	76%
Schuylkill	291	0	291	279	12	96%
Somerset	90	52	142	129	13	91%
Susquehanna	86	0	86	73	13	85%
Tioga	203	21	224	221	3	99%
Union	54	0	54	49	5	91%
Venango	137	0	137	135	2	99%
Wayne	69	0	69	60	9	87%
Westmoreland	838	20	858	785	73	91%
York	721	7	728	634	94	87%
Snyder	90	0	90	81	9	90%
Elk	81	0	81	79	2	98%
Columbia	54	0	54	54	0	100%
Perry	60	0	60	59	1	98%
Cumberland	285	35	320	311	9	97%
Pike	62	38	100	96	4	96%
Greene	112	0	112	89	23	79%
Washington	370	0	370	353	17	95%
Lebanon	240	0	240	234	6	98%
McKean	176	0	176	156	20	89%
Potter	64	22	86	77	9	90%
Wyoming	60	0	60	60	0	100%
Warren	48	0	48	39	9	81%
Cameron	15	0	15	15	0	100%
Fulton	34	0	34	32	2	94%
Juniata	39	0	39	34	5	87%
Forest	12	0	12	12	0	100%
Sullivan	16	0	16	16	0	100%

Source: PELICAN April Monitoring Report