2011-12 Early Childhood Education Profile: Berks County

As of 2010, there were 25,288 children under age five in Berks County.

Children in Berks County are at Moderate High risk for failing in school*

30.9 percent of children under age five are participating in publicly-funded quality early education programs**

When at-risk children receive quality early learning experiences before kindergarten, they are more likely to enter kindergarten with age-appropriate skills, do better in school, graduate high school and attend college or career training programs, have good employment and higher earnings.

Sources: Abecedarian Project, Perry Preschool Project

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* School failure is a person's inability to meet the minimum academic standards of an educational institution.
** Examples of quality programs are: Nurse-Family Partnership; Parent-Child Home Program; Head Start State and Federal (which includes Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program, Early Head Start, and Preschool Head Start); Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts; School-Based Pre-K; Early Intervention; and Keystone STARS

You can find out more about how each county’s risk level is determined in the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Program Reach and Risk Report at www.ocdelresearch.org.
Pennsylvania’s Early Childhood Education Programs

Child Care Certification regulates child care programs (family child care homes, group child care homes and child care centers) to make sure they meet minimum health and safety standards. In the 2011-12 program year, there were approximately 4,700 certified child care centers and 850 group child care homes, and more than 3,000 registered family child care homes.

Child Care Works provides low-income working families access to child care, making them more likely to retain employment and be more productive at work. Families must provide documentation demonstrating that they meet work and educational requirements for eligibility. Preference is given to teen mothers so they can remain in school. In the 2011-12 program year more families chose regulated and quality care than ever before, with 81 percent of children receiving Child Care Works enrolled in regulated child care and 52 percent enrolled in Keystone STARS programs. Approximately 126,400 children from birth to school age received Child Care Works on a monthly basis in the 2011-12 program year.

Early Intervention serves young children with disabilities/developmental delays and their families. Early Intervention builds upon the natural learning occurring in a child’s early years and promotes collaboration among parents, service providers, early childhood educators and others involved in the child’s life. Approximately 36,300 infants/toddlers and 48,800 preschoolers received Early Intervention services in the 2011-12 program year.

Head Start provides comprehensive early learning services to at-risk children and families, prioritizing enrollment to families at 100 percent of the federal poverty level or other categorical eligibility criteria. In addition to educational services, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, support to families and strong parent involvement. At the beginning of the 2011-12 school year, approximately one in five preschoolers in Head Start Supplemental programs showed proficient skills. By the end of the school year, approximately three in five children showed proficient language, math and social skills after attending Head Start Supplemental programs. In the 2011-12 program year, 36,500 children received Head Start services through state and federal funding.

Home Visiting Programs such as Healthy Families America, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and Parent-Child Home Program served approximately 8,369 children and families in the 2011-12 program year through state and federal funds. These programs have a family-centered focus that supports families through a strength-based approach that works with both the child and parent.

Keystone STARS provides families with a tool to gauge the quality early learning programs and is proven to improve the quality of child care based on an independent study.1 Child care and Head Start programs earn a STAR 1 to STAR 4 level by meeting quality standards for teacher qualifications, learning environment and program management. The percentage of preschoolers in Keystone STAR 3 and 4 programs with proficient language, math and social skills doubled from beginning to end of the 2011-12 program year. In the 2011-12 program year, approximately 179,200 children from birth through school-age were served by a Keystone STARS program.

Parent-Child Home Program provides a home visitor to help at-risk parents learn how to read, play and interact with their children in a way that promotes early learning and builds a positive parent-child bond. In the 2011-12 program year, Parent-Child Home Program served 190 children in six counties.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides high quality pre-kindergarten education for at-risk three-and four-year-olds in Pennsylvania. At the beginning of the 2011-12 school year, less than one in four children entering Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms showed proficient skills. By the end of the school year, approximately three in four children showed proficient language, math and social skills after attending Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. In the 2011-12 program year, 11,200 children were served in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

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