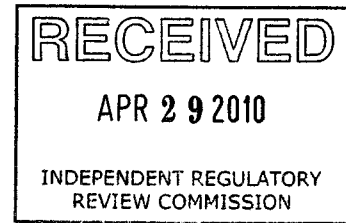




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Forest City Regional School District
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April 26, 2010

Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street
14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Commission members:

I am writing to express my support for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts final omitted regulations re-submitted to you on April 7, 2010 (#6-319). The quality expectations of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which are included in the regulations, are essential to gaining positive outcomes for our young children. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is giving our at-risk children, such as those living in low-income families, those with special needs, and English language learners the strong start that research shows can help them overcome these risk factors and enter school ready to learn.

An important piece of these guidelines is promoting inclusive classrooms. During a recent special education audit, our Pre-K program is the only area of operations for which the district received a commendation. This was due to the inclusive practices in that program that has two Down's syndrome students and an autistic student among a general population that includes 18 Head Start children and 29 other children of various abilities and backgrounds. Among these children are a number of Early Intervention students.

- Research has shown many positive effects of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs. The benefits accrue not only to children with disabilities but also to children with typical development, their families, classroom teachers, and the community at large.
- PA Pre-K Counts has been a contributing factor to the increase of EI children in typical settings. Historically, less than 50% of preschool children receiving Early Intervention services received their services in typical early childhood settings. Since the creation of PA Pre-K Counts and targeted efforts to promote inclusion in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms, 15% more preschool children receiving Early Intervention services are enrolled in typical classroom settings.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is working because it is providing high quality pre-kindergarten to our at-risk children in inclusive classrooms.

Please approve these regulations in full.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Vadella, Ph.D.

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