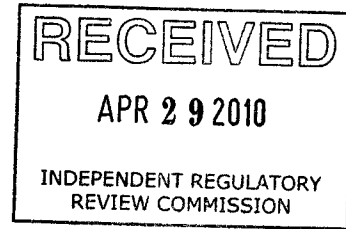


2817

Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street
14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Fax number: (717) 783-2664
irrc@irrc.state.pa.us



RE: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts final omitted regulations (#6-319)

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.

- 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.
- The quality expectations of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which are included in the regulations require approved providers to collaborate with infant/toddler and preschool Early Intervention services to provide a smooth transition for children entering classrooms, facilitate the Early Intervention services needed for children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms, and facilitate identification of children who are not receiving Early Intervention services but are eligible.
- 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 serving a proportionate amount of children receiving Early Intervention services. Approximately 4% of Pennsylvania's three and four year olds are participating in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, with 7.5% of those children receiving Early Intervention services. Across Pennsylvania, between 5%-7% of preschool children are receiving Early Intervention Services.

In my current position with the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) early childhood programs, I have direct experience with the success of pre-k classes in general, and the added benefit to children with special needs. Over 90% of children receiving early intervention services are currently included in pre-k classrooms. Because of the success of our inclusion programs, the number of children with special needs who are able to enroll in regular kindergarten classrooms has increased greatly. The PPS district continues to support pre-k efforts for ALL children and views our program as the cornerstone to school success in later years.

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

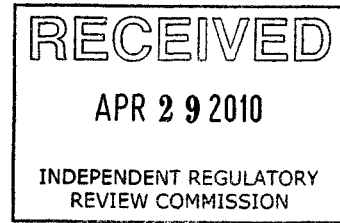
Please approve these regulations in full.

Sincerely,

Linda Ehrlich, CDA Coordinator
Early Childhood Programs
Pittsburgh Public Schools

2817

From: Ehrlich, Linda [lehrlich1@pghboe.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2010 1:25 PM
To: IRRC
Cc: tklunk@state.pa.us
Subject: Support Letter
Attachments: IRRC Letter.doc



Please see the attached letter.

Linda Ehrlich
Early Childhood Program, Pittsburgh Public Schools
Arlington Early Childhood Center
2429 Charcot Street Pgh., PA 15210
412.325.1483
lehrlich1@pghboe.net