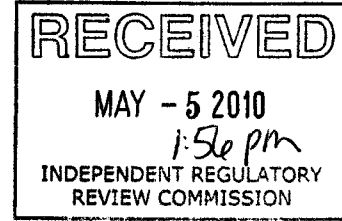


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From: Thomas, Jody [jthomas@laurelhs.org]
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2010 1:28 PM
To: IRRC
Subject: support for PA Pre-K Counts



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

Dear Commission Members:

I am writing to express my support for the PA Pre-K Counts final omitted regulations resubmitted to you on April 7, 2010 (#6-319).

The quality expectations of PA Pre-K Counts, which are included in the regulations, are essential to gaining positive outcomes for our young children. PA 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. When early childhood education classrooms offer inclusion, many positive effects are seen. Benefits accrue not only to children with disabilities but also to children with typical development, including their families, classroom teachers, and the community at large.

The quality expectations of PA 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 Early Intervention 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 classrooms settings.

Our program conducts developmental, language, speech, vision, & hearing screenings to PA Pre-K enrolled children. This process has identified areas where children need assistance which only aligns them for success. This is one area where the PA Pre-K funds assist in benefitting children's futures.

PA Pre-K 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,

*Jody Thomas, Director
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