



## Bucks County Early Childhood Education Profile

### Helping children reach their promise through quality early education

Quality early learning and child development play a major role in a child's future success in school and in life. Pennsylvania's early childhood initiatives play a major role in providing our families with access to reliable, quality early learning opportunities. Listed below are the ways in which these programs touch your county.

There are **36,528** children under age five living in Bucks County. Of those:

- **16%** live in households earning less than 200% of poverty. (2000 US Census defines "low income" as below 200% of federal poverty level, which was equivalent to \$34,058 for a family of four in 2000)
- **34%** live in households earning less than 300% of poverty level
- **6%** live in families whose mother has less than a high school degree
- **14%** of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in local school districts scored below proficient on PSSA in Reading in 2009

#### Quality early education can bridge the achievement gap before it begins.

Research has also shown that at-risk children who receive quality early education can catch up to their peers in cognitive and social emotional development before they reach kindergarten, so that they are ready to succeed when they enter school.

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**Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts** provides high quality pre-kindergarten education for 3 and 4 year olds in Pennsylvania which is free to families, with a focus on children at risk of academic failure. First year reports show children are learning, parents are engaged, and programs are offering quality services. In 2007-2008, 10,945 children participated in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

- **182** 3 & 4 year olds are being served by **4** lead agencies and their partners in Bucks county
- **1.18%** of Bucks county's 3&4 year olds participate in PA Pre-K Counts

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**Keystone STARS** is proven to improve the quality of child care based on an independent study and offers parents a tool to gauge the quality of the programs they choose. Child care and Head Start programs earn a STAR 1 to STAR 4 level based on quality standards for teacher qualifications, learning environment and program management. The higher the STAR level, the higher the quality early learning experience for young children. In 2007-2008, approximately 170,000 children from birth through school-age were enrolled in Keystone STARS programs.

- **63%** of Bucks County's regulated child care programs participate in Keystone STARS
- **17%** of Bucks county's children under age five are enrolled in Keystone STARS child care programs with **4%** enrolled in STAR 3 and STAR 4 programs

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**Child Care Works** provides low-income working families with reliable access to child care, making them more likely to retain employment and be more productive at work. In 2007-2008, approximately 88,000 children from birth to kindergarten received Child Care Works subsidy on a monthly average. In total, approximately 238,000 children from birth to school age received Child Care Works subsidy during the year.

- Approximately **1,252** children under age five living in low-income families in Bucks receive Child Care Works subsidy on a monthly average. That is only **3%** of that population.
  - The current waiting list for subsidy is **8 months for 454 children**, preventing parents able and willing to work from accessing employment (March 2011).
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**Early Intervention** serves children from birth to age five 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 71,800 children under age five received Early Intervention Services in 2007-2008.

- **4,291 children (12%)** under age five in Bucks County received Early Intervention Services in 2008-09.

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**Head Start** provides comprehensive early learning services to children and families who are most at risk of academic failure. Federal and state funding supports this program in Pennsylvania. In addition to educational programming, Head Start offers health/nutrition services, social service support to families and a strong parent involvement component, supports to children with disabilities. In 2007-2008, 30,739 children received Head Start services through federal funding, and 5,776 children received Head Start services through the state-funded Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program.

- **1.7% (636 total)** of Bucks county's children are served by Head Start:
  - **621** children in federally-funded Head Start
  - **15** children in state-funded Head Start

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### **More investment is needed in quality early education if Pennsylvania is to secure a brighter future for its children, families and communities**

Every child benefits from a quality early education. Approximately **31%** of children under age five in Bucks county have access to publicly funded quality early childhood programs.

In Bucks County, children in state and federally funded early childhood programs are funded at the rate of approximately **\$2,970** per child, an amount which is significantly less than the cost of providing a quality early education experience that produces positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

#### **Other significant important Bucks County facts:**

- Bucks County has the fourth largest homeless population in the state of Pennsylvania, with 60% of these individuals being children. There are homeless children in every school district in the county.
- Significant pockets of poverty exist throughout Bucks County, as is demonstrated by local school district data. There are many children on free/reduced lunch programs in Bristol Borough (60%), Bristol Township (51%), Morrisville (43%), Bensalem (38%), Centennial (21%), and Quakertown (22%).
- There are a total of 52 Title I elementary schools in the county. Each of the 13 districts includes at least one and up to nine Title I schools.
- More than 1,315 children county-wide ages birth to four are enrolled in CHIP. 8,614 are enrolled in Medical Assistance and CHIP Insurance Programs combined, representing nearly 24% of children ages birth to four in Bucks County in 2010.
- Bucks County's foreign-born population has grown 63% in the past ten years, creating language and cultural barriers that were previously non-existent. Concentrations of foreign language communities have been identified in the Bensalem, Bristol Boro, Bristol Township and Centennial school districts, with 50 different languages and dialects spoken by children and families in school districts throughout Bucks County.

The benefits of early education extend throughout communities in better school performance and lower special education and remediation costs. As these children become adults, communities benefit from a higher skilled workforce and lower public costs for public assistance, crime control and lost taxes.

### **Make a smart investment in Pennsylvania's future: support Pennsylvania's early childhood initiatives.**

*For more information, contact the Bucks County Quality Child Care Coalition  
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