



PEAK CONNECTIONS

PEAK

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Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness

PEAK Partnership Receives Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Grant

In July, Governor Ed Rendell signed legislation for PA Pre-K Counts devoting \$75 million to serve 11,000 children statewide in a quality Pre-K program. The PEAK Partnership received funding to serve 100 three and four old children in a full-day Pre-K program.

The PEAK classes are located at five community sites: Montgomery Early Learning Centers, Pottstown Family YMCA, YWCA Tri-County Area, Kindercare Learning Center and Warwick Child Care Center.

The focus of this grant is direct instructional services to children and the funds will be used for teacher salaries, materials, and to support the classrooms at the sites. Pottstown School District serves as the fiscal agent for the grant and provides oversight. Emily Baddeley, PEAK Pre-K Coach has been working with teachers and directors to prepare

the classrooms for the first day of classes. The 6.5 hour program is free to any age-eligible child who lives in the Pottstown School District. Publicity concerning the program is ongoing and classes are slated to begin October 29.

This is a marvelous opportunity for all of the children and will make a tremendous impact on school readiness in Pottstown. For the first time, families in Pottstown can choose a free full-day program that will offer high quality instruction aligned with Pottstown School District standards.

PA Pre-K Counts Sites

Montgomery Early Learning Centers

Pottstown Family YMCA

YWCA Tri-County Area

Kindercare Learning Center

Warwick Child Care Center



“This is a terrific, terrific budget. I believe it is a sound investment in Pennsylvania’s future.”

Governor Ed Rendell

PEAK Managing Partners

Pottstown School District

Montgomery Early Learning Centers

Montgomery County Head Start

Pottstown Family YMCA

YWCA Tri-County Area

Montgomery County Intermediate Unit

Pottstown Family Center

Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania

PEAK Partners

Montgomery County Child Care Consortium

Pottstown Public Library

Penn State Cooperative Extension

Southeast Regional Key

Grace Lutheran Preschool

KinderCare Learning Center

Warwick Child Care Center

PEAK

Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness

230 Beech Street

PO Box 779

Pottstown, PA 19464

Mary Rieck, PEAK Coordinator

Emily Baddeley, PEAK Pre-K Coach

Lori Davidson, Family Engagement Specialist

Sandra Leh, Early Childhood Health Specialist

610-970-6655

www.peakonline.org

Start Early. Reach Higher.

PEAK to Launch Health and Wellness Initiative

With concerns rising nationally about childhood obesity and overall child wellness, PEAK will begin a health and wellness initiative targeting young children enrolled at community-based childcare programs and their families.

The project, funded through a grant from Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation, will focus on working with site directors, teachers and families in providing professional development, mentoring and resources to

improve health practices.

Led by Sandra Leh, PEAK Early Childhood Health Specialist, the PEAK Health and Wellness Initiative will partner with community programs to address nutrition, exercise and other health-related needs that directly impact children’s readiness for kindergarten.

The new initiative is in response to the needs of the community programs and the directors look forward to working with the health spe-

cialist. Sandy joins the PEAK initiative with a strong background as a child care health consultant/trainer and is familiar with the Pottstown community. Sandy has a doctorate in nursing and is also on the faculty at Cedar Crest College.



Senator Bob Casey Visits Pottstown



Senator Bob Casey talked with educators, children and community members in Pottstown about the importance of quality early learning experiences. Senator Casey stopped by Montgomery Early Learning Centers in August to discuss children's issues. He read to a classroom of 4 and 5-year-olds and took a tour of the classrooms before speaking.

Senator Casey explained that funding for Pre-K Counts, a new education initiative recently signed into law by Governor Ed Rendell, is beginning to reach schools. He said the

program will serve Pennsylvania children well, but his goal is to see it expanded and applied to all schools in the U.S.

"I just think it's critically important we do this across the nation," the U.S. senator said.

Senator Casey's proposed national program, Prepare All Children Act, is designed to give all children at least one quality year of pre-kindergarten education.

Senator Casey said the benefits of a pre-kindergarten education exceed the benefits

the children and their families see, emphasizing the "long-term benefits to our economy."

Senator Casey noted that children whose educational skills are fostered at a young age can grow to become viable workers and develop a skill set to help us "compete in a world economy."

"It's a wise investment to invest in a child ... by providing him or her a quality education"

I think this is great! Other school districts in the area should get more involved with PEAK."

PEAK Parent

PEAK Professional Development

CDA Class

Over 29 Pottstown teachers are participating in the CDA class which PEAK is sponsoring. Upon completion, participants will have completed the 120 hours that are required for the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) and will be eligible for college credit hours upon matriculation into an Associate's Degree program. The CDA qualifies staff at the Level III on the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Career Lattice.

Pre-K Teacher Institute

For PA Pre-K Counts teachers and other interested staff across the region, PEAK sponsored a one-day professional development opportunity on October 18. The day covered topics such as typical child development, room arrangement, materials, lesson plans and standards. Twenty-nine teachers attended the training and received 5 hours of training credit.

Other Training

Other upcoming professional development opportunities

include the joint literacy training between Pottstown School District and community Pre-K teachers. As teachers become familiar with the school district curriculum, they are able to align instruction which facilitates the transition of children between the educational settings.

PEAK will also provide training on child outcomes reporting for the PA Pre-K Counts staff. Through ongoing site visits, the PEAK Pre-K Coach will be able to assess the impact of the professional development on the instructional practices.

Family Engagement

Kindergarten Workshop

If knowledge is power, then the Pottstown community has some extremely powerful parents! June 21st was PEAK's first parent workshop on Kindergarten Readiness. Parents and the Pre-K children enjoyed pizza and cookies while learning summer activities that will ensure their child's success in kindergarten.



Smart Start to Kindergarten

Family Resource Centers

PEAK Family Resource Centers have been placed in the PEAK partner sites to provide information for families on community resources and how to support their child's education at home. The resources will be changed frequently to provide families with many ideas of activities to ensure that their child arrives in school ready to learn and achieve.



Family Resource Center



PEAK Welcomes New PEAK Partners

PEAK welcomes new community early learning programs as PEAK Partners.

Grace Lutheran Preschool

Grace Lutheran is located on Charlotte Street in Pottstown and has provided preschool services to the community for over 30 years. The site offers a part-day program for children from two through Pre-K. Stephanie Houck serves as preschool director.

KinderCare Learning Center

Located near Industrial Highway, KinderCare is a Keystone STAR 4 child care center that serves infants through school age. KinderCare is a partner program with PA Pre-K Counts. The site director is Dawn Trout.

Warwick Child Care Center

Although Warwick is across the river in North Coventry, the site serves a large number of Pottstown children. They are also one of the partner programs with PA Pre-K Counts. Warwick serves infants through school age and is

a Keystone STAR 4 site. Michelle Fritz is the site director.

Dotlen Academy

Dotlen Academy is located on State Street in Pottstown. The site opened in 2006 and currently serves toddlers through school age with plans to expand to infants. Helen Oladocun is site director.

Support for Quality Improvement

PEAK will support the programs through technical assistance by

the PEAK Pre-K Coach, providing resources and professional development.

One goal of PEAK is to impact all children and families in Pottstown prior to Kindergarten entry.

The addition of new partner early learning programs affords the partnership the opportunity to extend its reach in the community.



Kindergarten Transition Creating Connections for Families, Children and Schools

Building on the work that began in the spring, the PEAK community Pre-K Teachers and Pottstown School District Kindergarten teachers are planning additional activities to strengthen the linkages between the community programs and the public school.

The PEAK Kindergarten Transition Committee was expanded to include teachers from community programs and district kindergarten teachers. The teachers met during the summer to formulate strategies for 2007-2008.

Kindergarten Orientation

In addition to the spring orientation held at the Middle School, the committee is planning an

evening orientation at local elementary schools the week before school starts. This will give families the opportunity to visit the school and meet the staff. Children can also get oriented to routines such as walking through the cafeteria line, where to go for dismissal and have a tour of the school.

Community Connection

The committee is designing cards to distribute throughout the community that will include information on Kindergarten registration. While early Kindergarten registration improved slightly in 2007, there continues to be a need for increased awareness of the importance of early registration.

Connecting Schools

Connecting teachers in the community programs and the district classes is an important part of aligning instructional expectations and smoothing the transition for children. The teachers will continue activities that were begun in the spring of visiting each other's classrooms and joint professional development. The community schools will be paired with an elementary site as a "Buddy School" and the teachers will work together to plan activities for the children and families.

Transferring Records

Creating an efficient method of transferring assessment information from community programs to Kindergarten is another focus

of the committee. The committee will identify the key items that should be transferred to Kindergarten and develop a system to facilitate sharing of information.

Fall Educators' Night Out

The first 2007-2008 Educators' Night Out for Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers will be held November 8 at Pottstown High School. The teachers will work together to design activities to implement the transition strategies. The joint activities between community and school district teachers build the foundation for improved transitions for both children and families.

PEAK Mission:

All children in Pottstown will arrive in Kindergarten ready to learn and achieve.



Start Early. Reach Higher.

Regional Superintendent Summit

Montgomery County Child Care Consortium, in collaboration with United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania and the Southeast Regional Key, are sponsoring a summit for superintendents in the southeast region.

The summit will focus on building community partnerships to improve school readiness. Dr.

Rudy Crew, Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools will be the keynote speaker. Dr. Crew is recognized as a national education leader and has collaborated with David Lawrence, president of the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, to meet the diverse needs of the families in the Miami community.

The Regional Superintendent Summit is scheduled for October 31 at the Brookside County Club. David P. Krem, Superintendent of Pottstown School District, will welcome the superintendents and highlight PEAK's work in the area of early childhood education in the community.



PEAK

Pottstown School District
230 Beech Street PO Box 779
Pottstown, PA 19464

Phone: 610-970-6655
Fax: 610-326-6540
Email: mriECK@pottstownsd.org

Start Early. Reach Higher.



PEAK

www.peakonline.org

PEAK is a collaboration of Pottstown School District and community organizations that are working together to design and implement strategies that enable children to enter Kindergarten ready to learn. PEAK focuses its work in five inter-related areas: community outreach, family engagement, quality improvement, kindergarten transition and health/wellness. PEAK's overarching goal is to build an infrastructure that ensures all children in Pottstown enter Kindergarten ready to learn and achieve.

PEAK Funding and Financial Support:

- Pre-K Counts Public Private Partnership Grant
- Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts
- United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania
- Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation



PEAK Committees for 2007-2008

Contact the committee chair to volunteer to work on the committee or for more information.

Community Outreach

Goal: Plan community events, activities, outreach to education leaders, legislators, policy makers, businesses, and the general public on the importance of quality early learning experiences

Chair: Erin Connolly—610-617-4550 ex 3045

Family Engagement

Goal: Provide resources, programming and opportunities to increase family engagement and to support families in their role as their child's first teacher

Chair: Lori Davidson—610-718-5372

Quality Improvement

Goal: To raise quality at community programs through resources, professional development and on-site coaching

Chair: Emily Baddeley—610-718-8635

Kindergarten Transition

Goal: To improve school readiness through the implementation of policies and activities designed to align instructional expectations and create connections between community schools, families, children and Kindergarten

Co Chair: Lori Hoch—610-970-6646

Co-Chair: Suzanne O'Connor—215-665-2453

Health and Wellness

Goal: To improve health, safety and wellness policies and practices at community early learning programs to support healthy lifestyles for staff, children and families

Sandy Leh—610-858-9310



Pennsylvania's Promise for Children
Because every child is Pennsylvania's future
www.papromiseforchildren.com