

a campaign of the
Pew Center on the States

News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Holly Barnes Higgins, 202.862.9863, hhiggins@pewtrusts.org
Liz Snyder, 202.552.2057, esnyder@pewtrusts.org

Pew Report: Pennsylvania Governor Making Pre-Kindergarten Funding and Effectiveness a Fiscal Priority

Rendell part of national trend to direct limited public resources to early education

WASHINGTON, DC—(May 5, 2009)— Gov. Ed Rendell’s proposal to grow Pennsylvania’s pre-kindergarten budget by 10 percent – in spite of a \$4 billion budget shortfall in FY10 – earns national commendation in a state-by-state analysis released today by Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States.

“We are thrilled that Governor Rendell has demonstrated a strong and sustained commitment to pre-k,” said Joan Benso, CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. “If his proposal is carried out, more children will be enrolled in a high-quality early learning program, ensuring that they will enter school ready to learn.”

The non-partisan annual report, “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Budget Proposals Fiscal Year 2010,” evaluates budget proposals for the next year and governors’ remarks in recent state of the state addresses to determine which leaders count voluntary, high-quality pre-k among their top education and economic development strategies. The findings underscore a growing interest among federal and state policy makers in targeting limited public resources to effective programs backed by research. This year’s report also addresses federal action, such as the Obama administration’s inclusion of funding proposals for early education in the stimulus package.

Even as they confront significant economic challenges and whittle spending to core priorities, the majority of the nation’s governors are increasing or protecting state investments in pre-k programs in the coming fiscal year.

The report spotlights Gov. Rendell’s proposal, which would allow the state’s Pre-K Counts program to expand to serve nearly 13,000 4-year-old children, an increase of 17 percent since the program’s creation in 2007. Gov. Rendell’s leadership on pre-k and the impressive results achieved are contrasted with those of his counterpart in New York, Gov. David Patterson, who has not employed effective measures to ensure full utilization of pre-k funding.

“These tough economic times only make a greater case for investing in programs that have been proven to work,” said Danielle M. Gonzales, project manager for Pre-K Now. “Pennsylvania’s young children and families are fortunate they have a governor who recognizes the value of early education – not just for them but for the economic health of the state as a whole.”

Key findings include:

- Fourteen governors are proposing to increase investment in early education.
- Thirteen governors are proposing to “flat-fund” early education programs, preserving current investment levels.
- The governors of Alaska, North Dakota and Rhode Island – states that currently do not provide state-funded pre-k – are proposing new pre-k initiatives.
- The governors of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and South Carolina proposed a cut in pre-k investments.
- Total proposed state investment in pre-k is four percent greater than FY09 appropriations (which were \$5.2 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia).
- If passed, these proposals would bring total state pre-k funding to \$5.4 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia for FY10.
- Facing one of the biggest budget shortfalls in the country, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine is calling for a 14 percent increase in pre-k investment, including the creation of an “incentive fund” to encourage school districts’ use of federal recovery funds to expand pre-k.

Pre-k is one of the most well-researched public education strategies of the last forty years. The preponderance of evidence shows quality early education helps children succeed in school and in life, and results in savings for every dollar invested. Children who complete quality pre-k programs enter school more prepared cognitively and socially, are less likely to be held back or need special education services, are more likely to complete high school, and become more successful and productive adults.

To view a copy of the report and learn more about the early education initiatives of the Pew Center on the States, please visit www.preknow.org or www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

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The Pew Center on the States identifies and advances state policy solutions. Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, collaborates with advocates and policymakers to lead a movement toward high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds.