



NEWS\*\*\*

## **PA Principals Association, Early Learning Advocates in Pittsburgh Urge Support for Substantial Investments in High-Quality Pre-k**

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**PITTSBURGH, PA (Sept. 26, 2017)**—Representatives from the Pennsylvania Principals Association, the statewide Pre-K for PA campaign, Pittsburgh Public Schools and Shady Lane School today discussed high-quality pre-k and its effectiveness in providing a strong academic foundation before a child enters kindergarten, and urged the state to increase investments in this once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity during a press conference at Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5

The event highlighted the findings of a new report, “Elementary School Principals Resoundingly Support Pre-K Investments,” produced by the Pennsylvania Principals Association in partnership with the statewide Pre-K for PA campaign. The report shows nearly 99 percent of elementary school principals agree that publicly funded, high-quality pre-k is an important tool for preparing children for kindergarten, particularly those at risk.

“If we are to help students be successful, we need to provide them with a strong start in school. I have observed how students have been able to thrive due to their participation in pre-kindergarten, which can minimize the amount of special education services students receive. High-quality early education matters and it helps students develop the skills necessary to enter school,” said Dr. Monica Lamar, Principal of Pittsburgh Dilworth PreK-5.

Elementary principals’ perceptions confirm research that shows that high-quality pre-k is especially beneficial for children from low-income families, helping put them at the same starting line as their more economically advantaged peers by the time they start school.

"We see it in our data, the children that attend our early childhood program are more successful in both reading and math in Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade than the students that did not have that opportunity. Principals and kindergarten teachers also tell us that the children that come from our program, or another quality preschool, are ready to learn on the first day of school. They are confident and comfortable with the learning environment and are ready to go," said Carol Barone-Martin, Executive Director of Early Childhood for Pittsburgh Public Schools added.

Becky Flaherty, Executive Director, Shady Lane School added, "Our partnership with Pittsburgh Public Schools had helped us expand our programming to more children who have economic barriers. We foster inclusion and always wish we could include more children in our program."

Approximately 64 percent or 2 in 3 eligible preschoolers don't have the opportunity to attend publicly funded, high-quality pre-k.

According to the report, more than 97 percent of elementary school principals in the Commonwealth strongly agree or agree that additional state investments in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k should be made. They join an ever-growing list of supporters who have articulated strong support for state funding increases in pre-k, which also includes governors and legislators from both sides of the aisle, business and education leaders, law enforcement officials, high-ranking military officers, pediatricians and world-class athletes.

In addition, principals, who are on the frontline of delivering quality education, reported they can easily distinguish between those students who attended high-quality pre-k and those who missed this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"When a child enters kindergarten unable to recognize some letters and numbers, complete a puzzle, or lacks other skills that can set that child on a path to succeed in school, that child is at an unfair disadvantage," said Dr. Paul Healey, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Principals Association.

"Principals face challenges leveling the playing field to ensure that child can reach his or her full potential. If every child who needs it had access to high-quality pre-k, we would see fewer children struggling or needing special education or remediation. We would see more self-confident children who love education as much as we do."

Responses to the survey were received from a diverse group of rural, suburban and urban school principals who are responsible for educating nearly 60 percent of elementary students statewide. They reported improvements in age-appropriate behaviors and the ability to reach academic milestones in students who attended high-quality pre-k.

"Too many children at risk of school failure miss the opportunity to attend high-quality publicly funded pre-kindergarten. Pre-k works! Decades of research has proven it and this survey adds the validation of Pennsylvania's elementary principals to the value of the public investment," said Joan Benso, President and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, a founding member of the Pre-K for PA Campaign.

"Elementary School Principals Resoundingly Support Pre-K Investments" is available at [www.papprincipals.org](http://www.papprincipals.org) or [www.prekforpa.org](http://www.prekforpa.org).

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