



*"The Pittsburgh School District has kept its commitment to early childhood. The district sees that there's a relationship and a value between what happens in pre-k to what happens in the rest of the student's career."*

*- Pittsburgh School District Executive Director for Early Childhood Education Carol Barone-Martin*

# SCHOOL DISTRICTS SEE THE DIFFERENCE

**Pittsburgh School District,  
Allegheny County, urban**

<b>Eligible three- and four-year olds:</b>	<b>4,365</b>
<b>Children served in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k:</b>	<b>3,222 or 73.81%</b>
<b>Current classrooms:</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Unmet need:</b>	<b>1,143 children or 26.19%</b>
<b>Additional classrooms required:</b>	<b>57</b>



## The Story

In education, closing racial achievement gaps has been a top priority but a tough nut to crack as schools strive to assure opportunity and achievement for every student.

In the Pittsburgh School District, that gap has been closed at a crucial point in children's lives: At kindergarten, there is no racial achievement gap between African-American children and kids of other races who finish the district's pre-k program. In fact, "the African-American children score one percent higher than other children in the program," says Carol Barone-Martin, the district's Executive Director for Early Childhood Education.

Pittsburgh School District maintains a steadfast commitment to high-quality pre-k, operating 82 classrooms with Pre-K Counts, Head Start, and Head Start Supplemental funding, plus five "reverse inclusion" classrooms that blend special needs students with those not needing developmental supports, funded through Early Intervention. The district's pre-k program partners with other quality prekindergarten programs and quality child care agencies, to assure excellence in early learning for as many children as possible.

However, all that good learning "doesn't just rub off on the other kids who didn't get quality pre-k," says Barone-Martin. Children from high-quality pre-k show distinct advantages over their peers who didn't get the same experiences:

**Academic progress:** Children from the district's pre-k had higher grades in first and third grades than their non-pre-k peers, according to one recent study. They also had higher first-grade attendance rates and higher third-grade PSSA scores. "All the way around, they're doing better," says Barone-Martin.

**Less special education and remediation:** In high-quality pre-k, children with developmental delays get the timely help that puts them back on track with their peers, and about 30 percent of children who have IEPs in the district's pre-k no longer need their IEPs in kindergarten. When English Language Learners experience the rich language immersion of the district's pre-k, 85 percent no longer need English language support on entering kindergarten. In both cases, "these students don't necessarily need to go to a special classroom or have additional support," says Barone-Martin. "That's a huge savings."

**Classroom orientation:** School preparedness means knowing how to listen to the teacher, how to think through problems, and how to hang up a coat and get started with the school day. "One principal said that the kids from our pre-k are ready to learn on the very first day," says Barone-Martin. That frees up time - months, even - that the teacher would have spent instructing children on classroom expectations. "If the teacher falls behind because kids aren't keeping up the pace, they can't cover everything they need to by the end of the school year."