

"We talk to community groups to help them realize that pre-k is also a benefit later in life. We talk about the reduction in crime rate our community could see, and the economic impact from a child who is more likely to finish high school. The community needs to be aware that these are the things that preschool can help change."

- Tyrone Elementary School Assistant Principal Amanda Kurtz

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Tyrone Area School District,
Blair County, rural

Eligible three- and four-year olds:	198
Children served in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k:	207 or 100%
Current classrooms:	10
Unmet need:	0
Additional classrooms required:	0



The District's Story

In early learning, from pre-k to kindergarten, attention to detail is essential to success.

"I can't stress enough the importance of the little things," says Tyrone Elementary School Assistant Principal Amanda Kurtz. "So, a great deal of coordination goes into aligning pre-k curriculum with kindergarten expectations in math, reading, and vocabulary - even installing a universal alphabet across classrooms, 'so kids will always have a bird as their picture clue for the letter 'B.'"

"If you're a student struggling, and your classroom environment changes with programs that aren't connected or aligned, that's a huge disadvantage," says Kurtz.

Assuring quality of pre-k and promoting access, within the district and community-wide, is a top priority at Tyrone Area. Kurtz admits to "driving the business department crazy" as she tries to squeeze every possible slot for its free pre-k from available funding sources of Pre-K Counts, Title I, keystones to Opportunities, and the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (plus district child care funded through state CCIS and parent tuition, and funding for the district's role as Early Intervention provider for preschool-aged children.) The district created a brochure listing quality pre-k programs, and district personnel even shows up at community events - a Labor Day picnic, an Irish heritage festival - to inform parents about quality pre-k opportunities.

The district puts forth the effort because the advantages of quality pre-k are evident:

Kindergarten readiness: Among children entering kindergarten from the district's own pre-k, 78 percent have the skills kindergarten teachers felt were necessary for success. Those children were significantly higher than others in letter knowledge, word and phonemic awareness, and writing abilities, and also in the math functions of counting, number identification, and measurement.

Less special education and remediation: About 80 to 90 percent of students receiving interventions did not attend the district's pre-k program. "They didn't have preschool and therefore need that opportunity to catch up in kindergarten," says Kurtz.

Academic progress: District officials "see the successes of those students that have attended our pre-k and how much farther ahead they are," says Superintendent Cathy Harlow. The high-performing district has a Pennsylvania School Performance Profile building-level academic score of 93.3, and "a lot of that is probably attributed to our students' initial entry into our pre-k program."

Classroom orientation: The same assessments that show academic readiness for kindergarten also show that children from quality pre-k are equipped with curiosity, initiative, persistence, and task analysis. "It's about kids wanting to ask questions, eager to learn, eager to pick up books," says Kurtz.