

"There should be quality preschools everywhere, no matter what. It shouldn't be what people can afford or what's convenient for them. It should be offered to everybody."

- Jodi Arnold

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SEE THE DIFFERENCE

**Neshaminy School District,
Bucks County, suburban**

Eligible three- and four-year olds:	474
Children served in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k:	224 or 47%
Current classrooms:	11
Unmet need:	250 children or 53%
Additional classrooms required:	12



The Teachers' Story

The students of Neshaminy School District kindergarten teacher Kimberly Matyi who come from quality pre-kindergarten have been exposed to literature. They have interacted with books. They can compare and contrast storylines.

Their classmates not from quality pre-k rarely even know their fairy tales. "Not even Three Little Pigs," says Matyi. It matters because "the classics are referred to in other literature on a regular basis. If they don't have that basic understanding of good literature, I can't make those references, and there's less they'll understand."

Neshaminy School District works with local pre-kindergarten programs to align curriculum and assure that pre-kindergartners are learning the skills needed for kindergarten success. "Very simple things can become big problems," notes Jodi Arnold, another district kindergarten teacher. "When preschool teachers let children write with all uppercase letters, it's a bad habit. We have kids who are very resistant to changing. It's creating a battle when there really doesn't have to be a battle."

Arnold can detect whether students have attended poor-quality or high-quality pre-k by their academic, social, and behavioral readiness. "Kids who come here

not having any letter recognition are already behind all the other kids who have learned their letters and sounds," she says.

The veteran kindergarten teachers see a range of benefits among students who come from quality pre-k:

Academic familiarity: Children who have experienced a quality preschool environment and its socialization opportunities "seem so much more confident, and they're able to assimilate and get the hang of it much faster," says Matyi.

Access to developmental supports: Quality pre-k programs spot developmental delays in children and connect with the help needed to overcome learning challenges. "They'll notice those red flags, not brush them off," says Arnold. "It's better if they catch a problem before kids come to kindergarten, when it might be harder to correct."

Classroom orientation: Children from quality pre-k programs are ready to engage in kindergarten activities and understand the expectations they face, says Matyi. Their ability to focus on learning gives them "a huge advantage" over classmates who are simply trying to navigate the classroom.