



"Most people understand that the most precious resource in any community is our children. They're going to be tomorrow's leaders, and it certainly makes sense to invest in them as early as possible."
 - Retired Superintendent Jeff Sparagana

"So many of our parents who qualify for Pre-K Counts have been able to go back to school or work a job while their child was in school. One woman was raising two children while she was attending college, and her husband passed away suddenly. Pre-K Counts enabled her child to be in school and be a kid, and at the same time get ready for what kindergarten was going to bring. She was grateful because she knew she was dropping her son off in an environment that was caring and safe and also stimulating for him."
 - Retired Superintendent Jeff Sparagana

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SEE THE DIFFERENCE

**Pottstown School District,
 Montgomery County, urban**

Eligible three- and four-year olds:	572
Children served in publicly funded, high-quality pre-k:	298 or 52%
Current classrooms:	15
Unmet need:	274 children or 48%
Additional classrooms required:	14



The Story

Since 1989, the Pottstown district has supported half-day pre-k for any child in the district. In 2006, the district's commitment grew to embrace the community, with creation of the PEAK Partnership, funded through a Pre-K Counts Public Private Partnership grant. The district is the senior manager of the PEAK Partnership, which stands for Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness, and which convenes community partners in community outreach, family engagement, quality improvement, kindergarten transition, and health/wellness to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Today, the district still runs its self-funded half-day pre-k in three of its four elementary schools, and it is piloting a full-day Pre-K Counts classroom in the fourth school. It is also the Pre-K Counts grantee for 10 classrooms established throughout the community.

Quality pre-k doesn't just teach children their letters and numbers, but also how to share, take turns, and learn to self-regulate their behavior during the critical developmental years before kindergarten, says retired

Superintendent Jeff Sparagana. "Without those things, they are not going to be successful in kindergarten. Once you hit age 5, a lot of characteristics are in place, and it's hard to have children relearn things."

The impact of quality pre-k is evident in Pottstown schools:

Kindergarten readiness: Children from Pottstown Pre-K Counts classrooms enter kindergarten better prepared to learn than the district-wide average. In 2014, 75 percent of students entering kindergarten from pre-k had the core skills of literacy, compared to the district-wide average of 52 percent.

Academic progress: By third grade, students from Pre-K Counts outpaced the district average, 70 percent to 60 percent, in meeting benchmarks of learning.

Less special education and remediation: With the advent of the PEAK Partnership and the district's Pre-K Counts program, the district saw a reduction in its special education population, according to Sparagana.