

## Partnership for Quality Pre-Kindergarten Description of Letter of Intent

The Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare, as part of a private-public partnership, are pleased to launch the Partnership for Quality Pre-Kindergarten and its first award competition. Funds are intended to expand quality pre-kindergarten in Pennsylvania and to support school districts' collaborative relationships with community early care and education providers by:

- Increasing the total number of children served in pre-kindergarten programs in Pennsylvania
- Developing model programs of quality that include partnerships, professional development, standards of best practice and community advocacy
- Establishing a statewide network of leaders in early care and education

### ELIGIBILITY:

School Districts who operate in high-need areas of the Commonwealth and who seek to support pre-kindergarten programming in their communities may apply. Districts need to demonstrate:

- Significant enrollment of at-risk children
- Commitment to early childhood through community participation in the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program AND/OR use of Accountability Block Grant funds for pre-kindergarten or full day kindergarten options AND/OR existing school-sponsored pre-kindergarten programming.
- At least one school that does not meet academic Adequate Yearly Progress
- Meaningful commitment to work in partnership and share resources with community-based early education and care programs.

Districts with ongoing operation of pre-kindergarten programs will be given additional consideration. These districts are encouraged to apply even if they do not meet the third criteria.

### SIZE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS:

Planning grants, ranging from \$10,000-100,000, will be available to school districts as needed.

Implementation grants are available to support the initiation of new or further expansion of quality pre-kindergarten services. These funds are expected to be awarded based on a classroom basis, and the anticipated baseline amount, which may change, is \$10,000 per classroom. Implementation grants will be available for three years.

### CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

In addition to the criteria listed above, school districts and their partners must agree:

- To participate in a statewide leadership network and professional development opportunities that focus on best practice, community engagement and advocacy
- To participate in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the partnership program

### IMPLEMENTATION DATES:

- Letters of intent must be postmarked by April 18, 2005.
- Grant applications will be distributed by April 30, 2005 and funds are immediately available once a district is selected to participate.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

For assistance or additional information, contact:

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☑My district is committed to working collaboratively with community partners to develop quality pre-kindergarten in accordance with the State's Early Learning Standards and guidance for quality pre-kindergarten. Provide a brief overview of existing partnerships with community child care, Head Start and Early Intervention, indicate purpose, length and outcomes of partnerships that exist. Also indicate names of specific Head Start and Child Care partners that you might anticipate working with through this program.

Head Start: Economic Opportunity Council of Warren-Forest County Child Care: First Presbyterian Daycare, Warren County YMCA, Rouse Childrens Center, North Warren Presbyterian Community Day Care and Preschool Center, Russell United Methodist Church Day Care & Preschool, Ruth M. Smith Center, Jefferson DeFrees Family Center, First United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church, Grace United Methodist Church, Otterbein United Methodist Church, and Sugar Grove Free Methodist Church  
(required) .

Early Intervention: n/a

Other: Warren County School District has launched, supported and driven numerous collaborative projects that have strengthened social and economic ties, leading to new early learning community vitality.

Our District's efforts for and progress toward the development of a Seamless Early Learning System (that offers children and families a smooth transition from child care to school) has become a template for change for our neighboring communities and counties. These innovative projects, organized and sponsored by our district and supported by our Coalition, have become working models of success. These projects include:

Innovative Practices 1: Neighborhood School/Center Partnership

Two years ago, the Warren County School District supported a pilot partnership between a neighborhood elementary school and one of our region's major child care centers. Today, the members of this pilot partnership meet on a regular basis in a district kindergarten room to discuss curriculum sharing, address collaborative issues, and work together to ensure that children are ready for school. The district participants - kindergarten teachers and their principal-- exhibit a professional respect for the child care providers that has been previously lacking on our community. In this small and personal way, they have helped these providers communicate to our larger community that they truly are more than just "babysitters. "

With this project, our district has established and developed a social bond that welcomes our providers to our community's early learning team. By stressing the significance of their jobs, these elementary educators have helped the providers themselves come to a clearer understanding of how their work with our youngest children can positively

impact early brain development - and really can help children come to school ready to learn. We have seen an incredible rise in pride of profession from our providers, and credit is due to our district.

This partnership developed our community's first ever school readiness checklist (enclosed), a document that is now used by our child care providers to focus on significant social, emotional and academic needs of each child. In addition, this partnership created our first-ever child care learning assessment document (enclosed). Vital to this achievement was a district kindergarten teacher's leadership. The teacher and the partnership created such a useful document that the teacher was invited and is now serving on a state-level assessment committee at the invitation of the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development! In addition to these efforts, this partnership has helped foster a friendly bond between child care providers and Warren elementary staff, one that reaps many benefits for our children and families.

Innovative Practices 2: Seamless Early Learning: Language Arts

Prior to District pro-active sponsorship of Seamless Education projects, our child care providers were an isolated, insular group who struggled to even find funding to purchase reading materials for the children in their care. Our centers are almost all non-profit and/or church-associated facilities, and all have very limited budgets.

The Warren County School District's Open Court Reading Readiness Project has empowered providers, and our children are reaping the benefits of that empowerment! The district supplied our seven major child care centers with Open Court Pre-K reading kits that enable our providers to introduce our 3- to 5-year-old children to the same literacy program they will use when they enter kindergarten. Financed entirely by the district with specific grant funding, this project was one of the first, if not the first, such project in the state. In addition to the supplies necessary to launch the early learning project in the centers, our district also arranged for a full-day, stipend-paid training session for the center's classroom and administrative staff. In July 2005, the district will sponsor Round 2 of Seamless Early Learning: Language Arts, offering the project to five area pre-schools.

Innovative Practices 3: Seamless Early Learning: Computers and Early Math

A year ago, many of our child care centers lacked state-of-the-art computers for their enrolled children. In fact, one of our centers had no computer at all. Another, because it could not document that it had budget resources for paper and ink, was denied a grant request for a new computer. The district realized this lack of early exposure to technology and electronic learning systems put children in those centers at disadvantage. The Warren County School District thus became the sole sponsor of our collaborative Seamless Early Learning: Computers and Early Math project. The district

supplied our seven major child care centers with computers, keyboards, printers, computer stations, Creative Curriculum Computer software and licenses - and paper and ink. Now, our providers are delighted to be introducing our 3- to 5-year-old children to the same early math computer program they will use when they enter kindergarten! Financed entirely by the district with specific grant funding, this project was one of the first, if not the first, project in the state. In addition to the supplies necessary to launch the early learning project in the centers, the district also arranged for

(required)

a full-day, stipend-paid training session for the center's classroom and administrative staff. In July 2005, the district will sponsor Round 2 of Seamless Early Learning: Computers and Early Math, offering the project to five area pre-schools.

#### Innovative Practices 4: Seamless Early Learning: Collaborative Trainings

Three years ago, our very small and rural community offered only separate training opportunities for public school teachers, child care providers, Head Start staff, and others associated with early learning. Recognizing the need for a fully coordinated system of training, the District participated in a Coalition-sponsored Coordinated Training Committee. With District support of staff as trainers and more, the District has partnered with Pennsylvania Pathways, Penn State Better Kid Care and other trainers to offer collaborative training sessions for public school educators, pre-k teachers, and child care providers. Two of these training events were the Open Court and Computer Literacy Training, but the District also helped develop and organize a daylong seminar on Autism, a Pre-K Observation Training, and Pre-K Assessment I and II training sessions.

#### Innovative Practices 5: Pre-K Scholarships for Needy Families

The Warren County School District has most recently partnered with the Warren-Forest Economic Opportunity Council to build a scholarship program for children whose families just miss the DPW child care and Head Start income eligibility cut-offs. This project will allow working families to enroll their children in high quality, district-approved early learning facilities. This is a major step forward for our community in that some working parents, after child care costs, find themselves working for as little as \$2 - \$3 an hour. In instances such as these, children are placed with unlicensed relatives or neighbors, frequently without the early learning advantages that can be offered by district-approved pre-kindergarten programs.

Briefly describe how you would approach the opportunity to 1) expand pre-kindergarten and 2) enhance the community's pre-kindergarten quality. Briefly focus on the number and sponsorship of classrooms that would participate, and when implementation would occur. Financial resources from this program are to be shared by districts with community-based partners in early education including Keystone Stars child care and Head Start. Both planning and implementation funds will be available as soon as the communities are selected, which is planned to occur in May. The Warren County School District will enthusiastically continue its involvement with the Childcare/Early Readiness Coalition (CCRD).

The grant will

allow the partnership to do three innovative projects to expand quality childcare into the community.

1. Warren County School District proposes to use \$20,000 to assist Head Start in establishing a classroom in one of the district elementary schools. In addition, the district will provide a mini-lab consisting of 5 computers, printers, SuccessMaker software, and Open Court student materials, to continue Head Start's alignment with the district's early childhood curriculum. This will require an additional \$15,000.
2. The school district will provide 5 computers, printers, the SuccessMaker software, and the Open Court student materials to each public library in Warren County. The purpose of the project will be to give access to curriculum materials to home daycare providers and parents who are unable to provide their children with daycare. The estimated cost is \$16,000.
3. The Warren County School District will partner with the Jefferson DeFrees Daycare Center to establish a pre-K classroom for 5-year old students who are identified as unprepared to enter the kindergarten environment. Children will be assessed at individual childcare centers using a standardized assessment provided by CCRD and the school district. The Jefferson DeFrees Center would manage the program, provide personnel, and work with the school district to provide appropriate school-readiness activities. The projected cost is \$25,000.

Please provide a brief statement explaining your interest and providing us with other information that demonstrates your commitment to participating in this program. Warren County School District is a pro-active partner in the development of a community-based early learning system that will lessen transitions for children as they enter school, as well as build community awareness of the very significant issue of early brain development. In the 2005-06 school year, the Warren County School District will expand its childcare partnerships to include 5 additional community daycare providers, each of whom will be trained through school district grant monies. Each provider will also receive a computer, printer, and software to implement the district's early education math and reading curriculum.