Pennsylvania
State profile

BUILD Pennsylvania structure

BUILD Initiative home
The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and the Pennsylvania Key (PA Key) jointly lead the work of BUILD in Pennsylvania.

State leads
Barbara Minzenberg, Ph.D.  
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Maureen Murphy, Director  
Pennsylvania Key

BUILD is in partnership with advocates, business leaders and philanthropy to support the state’s early childhood agenda.

Working inside and outside state government
While much of the BUILD Initiative work is housed within state government, it is coordinated in partnership with advocates, business leaders and philanthropy to support the state’s early childhood agenda.

Pennsylvania BUILD also works with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) and associated groups with whom they partner, including the Pennsylvania District of Kiwanis International, state and local Workforce Investment Boards, state and selected local Chambers of Commerce, local Society for Human Resource Management districts, regional business coalitions developed by Pennsylvania ELIC members, and the Pennsylvania School Board Association, among others.

Through Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children (PA’s Promise) alerts, Pennsylvania BUILD also coordinates messaging around the state budget with the early care and education coalition. This work connects members of the PA’s Promise network to advocacy organizations and partners with advocacy organizations for PA’s Promise Month press events.

BUILD Initiative priorities
Goals for 2012 include:

1. Continue to build and support a sustainable network of business champions at the state and local level to advocate for increased investment in high quality early care and education through the governor-supported Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC). Activities supporting this goal include:

   • The annual Economic Summit for 200 ELIC members and business executives

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• Outreach to policymakers to support quality early education
• Encouraging ELIC members to share Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children (PA’s Promise) materials with their more than 400,000 employees
• Helping to build local business leader coalitions to support development of quality early learning opportunities locally
• Working with the governor’s office to ensure support for quality early education
• Engaging statewide business-related groups such as Kiwanis International, regional Chambers of Commerce and Workforce Investment Boards to educate and mobilize their members in support of quality early education.

2. Develop messaging and materials which demonstrate the results of Pennsylvania’s early education system such as the Office of Child Development and Early Learning’s (OCDEL) annual report, PA Pre-K Counts report, Reach and Risk report, press releases and talking points, and presentations for OCDEL leadership.

3. Establish family education and outreach strategies to help families understand their quality early learning options, such as the PA’s Promise campaign with website and materials (www.papromiseforchildren.com); the Early Learning Community Education listserv which contains monthly themes, tips and tools for community education and family engagement; and the Early Learning GPS (Guiding Families Smoothly) online tool.

4. Strengthen community networks to reach all families and help them make good early learning choices.

The Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality system consists of a statewide Pennsylvania Key (PA Key) and six Regional Keys, which work with OCDEL to provide statewide leadership in the development of an integrated and coordinated system of program quality improvements and professional development supports for early childhood education. Programs administered by the PA Key and Regional Keys include:

• Professional development initiatives
• Early childhood mental health consultation
• Mind in the Making
• Public Private Partnership for Educational Success
• Head Start State Collaboration Office
• School Age Child Care Professional Credential & Director Credential programs
• Child Care Health Consultation
• Better Kid Care
• Coordination with Early Childhood Education Linkage System (ECELS)
• Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessments
• Regional monitoring and technical assistance for Keystone STARS, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and PA Pre-K Counts

The PA Key and Regional Keys are working to provide supports and assistance to local communities to continue some of their community engagement work.

Early care and education

QRIS overview
Keystone STARS is Pennsylvania’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement
Early learning standards

Pennsylvania has a comprehensive set of learning standards for early childhood, with age-specific standards for infant/toddler, pre-k, and kindergarten programs; these are aligned with kindergarten to grade three standards. The standards include nine domains, which encompass the five domains identified by the U.S. Department of Education as essential to school readiness.

The Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood were revised in 2009-2010 to better assure alignment across age groups, based on recommendations from an evaluation report completed by national experts Sharon Lynn Kagan and Catherine Scott Little. Examples of ways in which the standards have been aligned and integrated with other system components include the following.

The standards are being integrated into the state’s Standards Aligned System (SAS), a comprehensive, research-based online resource designed to provide educators with a framework and integrated tools to enhance their teaching effectiveness. The standards demonstrate sequential learning through a Continuum of Learning framework. All OCDEL programs are required to use the standards.

The standards are also integrated into the performance standards for Keystone STARS. Early education and care programs that participate in Keystone STARS must meet more stringent requirements for use of the standards and these requirements intensify at each progressive STAR level.

OCDEL makes information about the standards accessible to families, providers and community-members through family-friendly activity guides and Early Learning Standards wheels.

The development of PA Common Core included integration of the National Governor’s Association Common Core, PA Academic standards, as well as PA Learning Standards for Early Childhood. The Pennsylvania State Board of Education included pre-kindergarten in its adoption of its Common Core standards, training, and implementation plan.

Professional development system

Components of Pennsylvania’s professional development system include the:

- Early Childhood Education Career Lattice, which provides a guide to the education levels required for many different positions in the early care and education field
- Core Body of Knowledge (CBK), the state’s Workforce Competencies Framework
- Core Competencies for Instructors, Technical Assistance Consultants, and Career Advisors
- Instructor and Technical Assistance Consultant Certification Process
- Teacher Certification in Early Childhood
- Pennsylvania Director Credential
- Pennsylvania School-Age Professional Credential
- Early Intervention Language Coach Credential
- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMH) Competencies

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• Professional Development vouchers for CDA and credit-bearing coursework
• Fifty-six articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education
• Online Workforce, Training and Trainer Registries with expansion scheduled for 2013

The state offers its “Gate Opener Grants,” a program in which colleges and universities work with early childhood professionals to address challenges they face as they earn bachelor’s degrees.

The PA Keys to Professional Development Refund Voucher Program offers partial reimbursement for courses taken for credit from an accredited college or university towards an early childhood education credential or degree. Teachers working at least 20 hours a week in a Keystone STAR 1 or above child care program may receive this partial reimbursement, up to $3,000 per person per year. Professionals must receive a grade of B or higher to be eligible for reimbursement. Keystone STARS, Head Start Supplemental Programs and PA Pre-K Counts programs may use a portion of their grants and awards to pay for higher education for their staff.

Assessment

How is assessment being used within the early childhood system?
Pennsylvania has developed and implemented a Comprehensive Assessment System to ensure that its early education and care programs meet the quality expectations defined in program performance standards. This includes:

• Developmental screenings – All state-funded early education and care programs are required to administer developmental screening to all children, and make referrals when necessary.
• Formative assessments – PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental programs, Early Intervention, and Keystone STAR 3 and 4 programs use OCDEL-approved authentic assessment tools, which incorporate teacher observation to measure child progress, and report assessment outcomes into the Pennsylvania Early Learning Network (ELN) statewide data collection system.
• Measures of Environmental Quality – Pennsylvania uses the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) to measure classroom quality.
• Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions – Pennsylvania is piloting the use of CLASS in Keystone STARS 3 and 4 classrooms to determine the feasibility of statewide implementation in all early education and care programs.

Kindergarten entry assessment
Pennsylvania is designing a Keystone Kindergarten Entry Inventory (KKEI) Framework to provide a common statewide reporting tool for child outcomes. The framework will measure outcomes across the five essential domains of school readiness:

• Language and literacy development
• Cognitive and general development, including early math and scientific development
• Approaches to learning
• Physical well-being and motor development
• Social and emotional development

In the fall of 2011-2012 school year, the state piloted a version of this framework in 24 schools in seven school districts. Based on participant feedback and statistical analysis of outcomes, the tool was revised and is being piloted again in fall 2012. To date, 306 kindergarten teachers from 72 school districts have received professional development and will participate in a year two pilot of the KKEI.

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Health/mental health/nutrition

Among the health, mental health and nutrition initiatives underway in Pennsylvania are the following.

Through funding from the Heinz Endowments, Pennsylvania increased the number of mental health therapists trained to provide Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), which has been shown to decrease child behavior problems and improve parent-child relationships.

A Family Health Nursing Services Consultant, specializing in maternal and child health, is in each of the state’s six Community Health Districts. This
licensed nurse is responsible for the coordination of family health program services, public health education, and outreach activities within the district.

Pennsylvania’s Medical Home Initiative, Educating Practices in Community-Integrated Care (EPIC-IC), supports children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN). Under this initiative, health professionals team with families to access all medical and non-medical services necessary to help children reach their full potential.

**Family support/engagement**

Pennsylvania has instituted a number of effective family support and engagement strategies.

Pennsylvania has adopted the **Strengthening Families** framework and is working to integrate it into its early childhood programs.

**Pennsylvania's Promise for Children**, statewide public awareness campaign, educates families about how to promote their child’s quality early learning and development.

Pennsylvania is creating the Early Learning GPS (Guiding Parents Smoothly) family survey tool.

**The Parent Child Home Program** provides a home visitor to help parents of high-needs children learn how to read and play with their children in a way that promotes early learning and builds a positive parent-child bond.

**The Nurse-Family Partnership** Program provides registered nurses to work with low-income, first-time expectant mothers through the child’s early years to ensure a healthy pregnancy and engage in activities with the baby after birth that will promote healthy development.

Pennsylvania was awarded an additional competitive Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) grant in April 2012 for approximately $9 million a year for three years provide evidence-based home visitation services to more than 660 young children in high risk communities.

**OCDEL** has developed a number of activity guides and tools packed with fun activities that are aligned with the Early Learning Standards and help develop all the skills young children need to succeed. These easy-to-use materials are distributed to families through early childhood programs, libraries and community organizations.

**Cross-sector linkages**

**Early learning, health, mental health and family support**

Pennsylvania has worked to integrate health, mental health and family support strategies into early education and care programs.

**The Pennsylvania American Academy of Pediatrics** operates the Early Childhood Education Linkages System (ECELS) to provide health professional consultation, training, and technical assistance to improve early childhood education programs via Keystone STARS.

**The Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program** began in 2007 in response to the need for additional health and safety information, as identified by Environment Rating Scale scores. CCHC provides specially-trained health and safety professionals to offer consultation, technical assistance, and professional development to child care providers. Child care health consultants can give assistance over the phone, during onsite visits, and through trainings.

**The Parent Advisory Council** has been established and a Special Assistant for Family Engagement has been appointed to coordinate family engagement strategies across programs.

**Keystone STARS** requires that programs provide parents with an increasing intensity of health promotion information at each STAR level. Likewise, programs must increase their focus on partnerships with families and community.

**The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC)** is a child-specific consultative model which addresses the social-emotional development of young children within their early care and education (ECE) program. Services are provided at the request of the director or teacher and with the permission of the child’s parent or guardian. The program includes an array of customized services that are based on the Pyramid Model for Promoting the Social Emotional Competence of Young Children (Center on the Social-Emotional Foundations for Early Learning).

**OCDEL** has expanded access to the I Am Moving, I Am Learning (IMIL) initiative – from Head Start programs to all early childhood education programs – in partnership with the Head Start Collaboration Office and U.S. Office of Head Start. IMIL is a proactive approach for addressing childhood obesity in young children in early childhood programs. In the 2010-2011 school year, Pennsylvania offered a three-day I am Moving, I am Learning Instructor Institute to 62 PQAS instructors. In
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2012, two-day regional workshops will target approximately 300 early childhood educators across the state.

**Keystone Kids Go!** is an initiative in Pennsylvania focused on improving young children’s nutrition and physical activity. The initiative is targeted towards early childhood professionals from child care, Head Start, Early Intervention, family literacy, and pre-kindergarten programs.

It was created by the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, Education, and Public Welfare (OCDEL) in partnership with Tuscarora Intermediate Unit, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Family Literacy Programs, Pennsylvania Nutrition Education Network, and Head Start State Collaboration Office.

**The Pennsylvania One Book, Every Young Child** campaign provides an annual book selection and take-home resources to every child in select early education and care programs as well as children in homeless shelters.

**K-12 linkages with the early childhood system**

There are important linkages between the K-12 and early childhood systems in the state.

Standards for early learning are aligned with kindergarten to grade three and are embedded in the state’s pre-k to grade four teaching certificate.

Pennsylvania has also adopted a pre-k to grade 12 Common Core in English Language Arts, and Mathematics.

Pennsylvania has substantially increased participation in the National Institute for School Leadership Early Childhood Executive Leadership Institute (NISL ECELI), a professional development program which brings together early care and education and school district administrators in local teams for a five-day training, which culminates in a locally designed plan for linkages.

Teacher Evaluation procedures are aligned pre-k to grade 12 and include training for administrators in observation and use of outcomes data in rating teachers on a four point scale. Supports for improvement will now be part of the system.

**Assuring racial, cultural and linguistic responsiveness**

Pennsylvania has placed a strong emphasis on assuring racial, cultural and linguistic responsiveness in its early childhood system through multiple strategies.

Pennsylvania underwent a process several years ago, using the Casey Foundation’s “Race Matters” curriculum to make changes to its early learning programs, which use a race and equity lens. Since then, it has developed a curriculum that emphasizes racial, cultural and linguistic responsiveness. This is offered to any provider working with young children, including child care providers, trainers, home visitors, etc.

Ongoing professional development opportunities are regularly offered to technical assistance and child care providers to provide tools and strategies they can use to provide more culturally and linguistically responsive care to children and families.

In 2009, OCDEL commissioned Dr. Lisa C. Buenaventura to create the Early Care and Education English Language Learner (ELL) Research Brief and Toolkit to help early learning programs to address the needs of infants, toddlers, and pre-k to grade three English Language Learners (ELLs) from immigrant, refugee and migrant families within the state. The ELL Toolkit has been developed to provide research-based information, guidelines and principles for early learning professionals to promote culturally competent practice.

A six module curriculum on “Working with Dual Language Learners/English Language Learners in Early Learning Settings” has been developed and Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System instructors are trained to provide training to early care and education professionals.

**Pennsylvania is the only state that currently meets all 10 fundamentals of coordinated state early learning and development data systems identified by the Early Childhood Data Collaborative.**

**Early childhood data system efforts**

Pennsylvania is the only state that currently meets all 10 fundamentals of coordinated state early learning and development data systems identified by the Early Childhood Data Collaborative. Pennsylvania has established uniform data collection through Pennsylvania’s Enterprise to Link Information for...
Children Across Networks (PELICAN), a network of subsystems that manage data for PA Pre-K Counts, Keystone STARS, Child Care Works Subsidy, Provider Certification, Head Start and Early Intervention. PELICAN also includes an Early Learning Network (ELN) subsystem designed to guide instruction, inform state policies, and increase efficiencies across all programs overseen by OCDEL. Through ELN, OCDEL collects two types of information, child-level data and program-level data.

Child-level data is keyed to a unique child identifier common to both state public welfare and education data systems. This information includes each child’s family demographics and enrollment details. Personally identifiable information is delinked from service and outcome data but remains program-level data.

Program-level data is keyed to a unique provider identifier, which is the same teacher identifier system used in the kindergarten to grade 12 system. This information includes program and workforce data such as teacher qualifications, turnover rates, and classroom quality rating scores. PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental, Early Intervention, Keystone STARS, Child Care Certification and Child Care Works all use the ELN data system to enter child and program data. These child outcomes help to inform program quality across early education and care programs.

**BUILD Pennsylvania Funders**
- Heinz Endowments
- William Penn Foundation