



## First Steps Pennsylvania

Focus on Early Learning

### **What is First Steps Pennsylvania?**

First Steps Pennsylvania (First Steps PA) is a statewide non-partisan campaign supported by a broad-based coalition from around the Commonwealth committed to raising the visibility of high-quality early childhood education during the 2010 gubernatorial election and partnering with the next administration to continue to build Pennsylvania's high-quality early learning system.

Campaign partners will galvanize resources to advance voter registration, voter education and get out the vote strategies in order to assure that gubernatorial candidates address children's early learning needs and parents' needs for workforce supports in Pennsylvania.

***Simply put, the goal of First Steps PA is to make early childhood education a priority issue for gubernatorial candidates and the next state administration.***

### **Why Does it Matter?**

The 2010 gubernatorial election provides a great opportunity to build upon what we have accomplished in early learning in Pennsylvania over the last decade. Pennsylvania has moved from the position of having a weak early childhood education system to a model for other states and the nation, but much work remains.

- Only 30 percent of Pennsylvania's three- and four-year-old children who are income-eligible have access to publicly-funded pre-K.
- The child care subsidy waiting lists was at a record high of more than 16,000 in fall 2009. The waiting list was cleared by using

one-time ARRA funds in May 2010 but grew to nearly 6,500 by July 2010.

- Fifteen percent of children birth to five are served by Keystone Stars providers but only three percent attend programs that have achieved Star 3 and 4 levels.

### **What is the Campaign's Agenda?**

Campaign partners have advanced a five point agenda that includes: increased access to high quality child care for all children; research based supports to strengthen families and help parents in their role as their child's first teacher; expanded availability of publicly funded pre-K; continued guarantee of early intervention services; and, early learning programs that are staffed by a well-trained and appropriately compensated workforce.

### **Who are the Campaign Partners?**

The First Steps PA Campaign leadership includes the following organizations:

Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children

Education Voters of Pennsylvania

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids *Pennsylvania*

Mission: Readiness *Pennsylvania*

Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children

Pennsylvania Child Care Association

Pennsylvania Head Start Association

Pennsylvania Home-based Child Care Providers Association

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children

Public Citizens for Children and Youth

Seniors4Kids - Pennsylvania

United Way of Pennsylvania

**How Can I Join?** Go to [www.firststepspa.org](http://www.firststepspa.org)