



**Forest Area School District**



## **Pre-K Counts Handbook**



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# Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Overview

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is bringing quality half-day and full-day pre-kindergarten to nearly 19,000 three and four year olds in Pennsylvania.

## What can I expect from a PA Pre-K Counts classroom?

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms will:

- have teachers with the education and expertise to teach young children
- use a curriculum that will help your child grow academically and socially
- regularly review your child’s progress and choose teaching and learning activities that are best for your child
- help you and your child adjust to pre-kindergarten and smoothly transition to kindergarten
- offer a small class size (no more than 20 students per one teacher and one classroom aide) so that your child has plenty of one-on-one time with the teacher
- operate 180 days a school year

## Who is eligible for Pre-K Counts?

- Children must be 3 or 4 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the enrollment year
- Children are only eligible for the Pre-K Counts program for the 2 years preceding their eligibility for kindergarten
- Income eligibility is up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level

## 2020 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines

| 300%            |          |         |        |
|-----------------|----------|---------|--------|
| Family Size     | Annual   | Monthly | Weekly |
| 1               | \$14,580 | \$1,215 | \$281  |
| 2               | \$19,350 | \$1,613 | \$375  |
| 3               | \$24,120 | \$2,010 | \$470  |
| 4               | \$28,890 | \$2,408 | \$564  |
| 5               | \$33,660 | \$2,805 | \$658  |
| 6               | \$38,430 | \$3,203 | \$753  |
| 7               | \$43,200 | \$3,600 | \$847  |
| 8               | \$47,970 | \$3,998 | \$941  |
| Each Additional | \$13,440 | \$1,120 | \$258  |

### East Forest Contacts

|                     |                   |  |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| <b>Teacher</b>      | Katelyn DeLay     | <a href="mailto:kdelay@forestareaschools.org">kdelay@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-927-6688       |
| <b>Aide</b>         | Beth Gilford      | <a href="mailto:bgilford@forestareaschools.org">bgilford@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-927-6688   |
| <b>School Nurse</b> | Shenessa Rossetti | <a href="mailto:srossetti@forestareaschools.org">srossetti@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-927-6688 |
| <b>Head Teacher</b> | Chris Pappas      | <a href="mailto:cpappas@forestareaschools.org">cpappas@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-927-6688     |
| <b>Principal</b>    | Deb Arner         | <a href="mailto:darner@forestareaschools.org">darner@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-927-6688       |

### West Forest Contacts

|                     |               |  |
|---------------------|---------------|--|
| <b>Teacher</b>      | Jennifer Fish | <a href="mailto:jfish@forestareaschools.org">jfish@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302       |
| <b>Aide</b>         | Cindy Hoovler | <a href="mailto:choovler@forestareaschools.org">choovler@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 |
| <b>School Nurse</b> | Krista Wright | <a href="mailto:kwright@forestareaschools.org">kwright@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302   |
| <b>Head Teacher</b> | Amanda Olsen  | <a href="mailto:aolsen@forestareaschools.org">aolsen@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302     |
| <b>Principal</b>    | Dean Hoffman  | <a href="mailto:dhoffman@forestareaschools.org">dhoffman@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 |

### District Contacts

| <b>Position</b>                          | <b>Name</b>     | <b>Contact Information</b>   |
|--|-----------------|--|
| <b>School Counselor</b>                  | Mike Cradduck   | <a href="mailto:mcradduck@forestareaschools.org">mcradduck@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 or 814-927-6688 |
| <b>Specials Teacher-Gym</b>              | Michael Wright  | <a href="mailto:mwright@forestareaschools.org">mwright@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 or 814-927-6688     |
| <b>Specials Teacher-Art</b>              | Michelle Mazur  | <a href="mailto:mmazur@forestareaschools.org">mmazur@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 or 814-927-6688       |
| <b>Specials Teacher-Library</b>          | Jane Cislón     | <a href="mailto:jcislón@forestareaschools.org">jcislón@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 or 814-927-6688     |
| <b>Specials Teacher-Music</b>            | Lori Beatty     | <a href="mailto:lbeatty@forestareaschools.org">lbeatty@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-3302 or 814-927-6688     |
| <b>Superintendent</b>                    | Amanda Hetrick  | <a href="mailto:ahetrick@forestareaschools.org">ahetrick@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-4491                   |
| <b>Director of Curriculum &amp; Tech</b> | Elisha Pospisil | <a href="mailto:epospisil@forestareaschools.org">epospisil@forestareaschools.org</a><br>814-755-4491                 |

# Staff Qualifications

The teacher in our pre-k classroom has a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood education and has a Pennsylvania teaching certificate. Teacher aides are required to achieve the status of "highly qualified" to maintain their position. In addition, the teacher and aide are required to attend various trainings and professional development activities each year.

## Curriculum Information

The Pre-K Counts classroom uses *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* which is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features exploration and discovery as a way of learning. Our goal is to develop confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool* allows children to master skills at their own pace. It enhances social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language development. It also uses steps that sequence the development of a child as an approach to learning. All lesson plans are aligned with **Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards**. The classroom is arranged in centers. A description of each center is listed below.

### **Art**

A creative outlet for kids to help express their emotions and ideas. Children can experience different textures and use different materials as they create their works of art. Fine motor skill development and improved hand-eye coordination are developed in this center.

### **Blocks**

Block play enables children to improve their motor skills, practice problem solving, and to learn how to work with their classmates. It allows children to explore their creative side by building unique structures and communities with blocks, block people, and block animals while teaching children about basic engineering and architecture concepts.

### **Literacy**

There's a quiet area where children practice their reading, writing, and comprehension skills. This area helps children express their ideas, explore their interests, and learn about the world around them.

### **Technology**

A variety of great educational resources that can be utilized to teach children new subjects in a fun and interactive way. The goal of this center is to help children become digitally literate, explore information about their world and can use technology to accomplish various tasks.

### **Dramatic Play**

Allows children to role play as adults in everyday situations and explore a variety of careers. Dramatic play encourages creativity, self-expression, and knowledge of the community. It is also used to help teach children about other countries, cultures, and customs.

### **Sand and Water**

Children can explore with sand and water and learn to share with others as they play in this learning center. This center broadens children's sensory play experiences and encourage creativity.

### **Nature and Science**

This center brings the outdoors indoors and gives children opportunities to explore nature and science concepts.

### **Music and Movement**

Encourages children to be physically active, and gives them opportunities to experiment with sound and music. A music and movement center can also promote self-expression, foster creativity, and help children relax.

### **Math and Manipulatives**

Children can practice problem-solving skills and improve their hand-eye coordination, in this center. This center also fosters a positive attitude about math.

## **Challenging Behavior**

In our Pre K counts program we strive to create a classroom environment in which all children are successful and challenging behaviors are minimized. All of our teachers and staff have been trained in Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) which is the way for our school to encourage good behavior. With PATHS, we teach children about behavior just as we would teach about other subjects like reading or math. The focus of PATHS is prevention, not punishment. Our teachers strive to create a nurturing classroom environment and build positive relationships with all children and their families. We work closely with families to address concerns or challenges in school or at home.

When challenging behavior arises, our teachers and staff analyze the situation including looking at the classroom, patterns in behavior, and tailoring their response to the needs of each child. In addition, our staff

works closely with families to communicate their concerns, as well as brainstorm solutions. The teacher has a variety of resources within our school community to call upon when needed including administration and our school counselor. In addition, our program will help families connect with Early Intervention and other community resources when needed.

Ultimately our goal is to provide a positive high quality introduction to school for all our students, and to communicate and work closely with families when situations arise. In turn, we ask that all families communicate with the classroom teacher any concerns they are having as they arise. Please keep in mind that we cannot share specifics about other children with you, and we take the confidentiality of all children very seriously. If you would like additional information about outside resources, our schools' procedures, or ways you can help your child succeed at school, please contact your child's classroom teacher or administrator anytime.

## Inclusion

Pre- K Counts supports the definition of inclusion provided in the joint position statement on early childhood inclusion from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Early Childhood (DEC) as follows:

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports (2009)

Pre-K Counts recognizes that inclusion benefits everyone and has as its highest value in early childhood practices that include ALL children.

The following topics address Access, Participation and Supports:

### **Alignment with Federal and State Policies**

Staff is trained on Federal Laws and Regulations including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Staff is also trained in Pennsylvania Laws and Regulations including the Pennsylvania Early Intervention Service System Act 212 of 1990, Chapter 14 and Pre-K Counts Regulations.

### **Highly Skilled Workforce**

All Pre-K teachers hold Pennsylvania certificates in Early Childhood Education. All staff receive ongoing professional development throughout the school year. Teaching assistants are included in these professional development activities. Technical assistance is also provided by the Pre-K Counts Coordinator.

### **Strong Parent Partnerships**

It is the belief of the Pre-K program that parents are an important part of their child's education. Staff communicates with parents via communication notebooks, newsletters and emails/texts. Parents are also invited into the classrooms to see what their children are working on. Two-way communication is emphasized. Parents are given support for specific student needs as appropriate. Confidentiality of student information and situations is valued, and a Confidentiality policy is in place and followed by all staff.

### **Setting Goals and Tracking Data**

Parent input is included in setting goals for their child for the year. Ongoing communication occurs throughout the year regarding student progress. Teachers collect data and parental input is continually encouraged. Teacher and parent input is used by Pre-K Counts and the school to set long-term program goals.

### **Universal Screening**

All children receive an initial screening which includes a developmental, vision, hearing and review of general health information. The screening results are used to individualize instruction and to help identify student strengths and needs. Screening information is also used to facilitate appropriate referrals.

### **Resources and Supports**

Collaboration to include children in community settings is planned and intentional to meet the specific needs of the family and child. Parents and personnel from inclusive sites are invited to all IEP meetings. Ongoing support is provided to families and personnel in community settings. Early Intervention and Pre-K staff participate in collaborative meetings.

## **Parent Connection**

### **Communication**

Every child will have a folder in their book bag. Important notes from the teacher, calendars and newsletters will be sent home in the folder. Parents are encouraged to place any important paperwork or notes in their child's folder. Teachers assist children in emptying and filling their folder every day. In addition, please feel free to call or email your child's teacher anytime you have any questions or concerns.

### **Open House**

An evening school wide open house is held in the fall. We invite all preschoolers and their families to come in and check out the classroom. We will share our daily routine with you and show you what your children have been learning. It will also be an opportunity to explore the rest of the school building.



## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parental involvement is the key to your child's educational success so we encourage you to attend parent-teacher conferences! Our school district will hold parent-teacher conferences in **November** for all students and as needed throughout the year. Conferences are a wonderful time to look at progress, see samples of student's growth and set goals together. More information will come home about conferences. Stay tuned!

## **Visitors and Volunteers**

We encourage parent volunteers in our classroom throughout the year. Whether you are sharing a special talent, reading a story or volunteering during a school party, we would love to see you in our classroom! Whenever you need to visit the school, access us through the main front doors only. You must press the door buzzer, enter the main office, sign-in and present identification to obtain a visitation pass which is to be worn at all times while in the building. Our school district has a policy that all volunteers must have their clearances in order to volunteer in our school building for the protection of all students. The process of obtaining clearances is fairly simple and free. To find out more please contact Central Office at 755-4491 or visit our website: <http://www.forestareaschools.org/parents/volunteer-information/>

## **Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)**

Our school has a very active PTO. Please plan to attend a meeting. PTO holds a variety of family fun activities throughout the year. Please pay attention to school calendars that come home for dates and times.

## **Screenings**

Pre-K Counts classrooms will complete a developmental screening known as *z*yx@MZY(ASQ) and *z*yx@MZY@MZY" k n{bl Mj(ASQ-SE). Input from parents is very important. We will either meet with you to fill out the screenings or send them home for you to complete. In addition, our school nurse will conduct vision and hearing screenings and also arrange for a dental screening for all students. A permission will be sent home early on so that IU9 Early Intervention can screen your child's speech and language development. Please contact your child's teacher at any time if you have any questions about these screenings or your child's development.

# Classroom and School Procedures

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays are very important to young children! Our teacher acknowledges each child's birthday and does their best to make your child feel special. If you would like to send in a special treat to celebrate, please remember only store bought treats are permitted.

## **Special Occasions**

Holidays such as Christmas, Halloween, and Valentine's Day will be celebrated at school. However, we realize that not all families are comfortable having their children participate in these holidays. Please let your teacher know if your cultural beliefs conflict with these holiday celebrations and arrangements can be made that respect your family's culture and beliefs.

## **Meals, Nutrition and Allergies**

All students enrolled in the Pre-K Counts classroom are provided with Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack every day free of charge. Meals are offered at a set time in our school cafeteria, and snack time is in the classroom. Your child will be given nutritious choices every day, and a breakfast and lunch calendar will be sent home every month to inform you of these choices.

Meal/snack time is a great time to practice self-help, communication and social skills. Our staff works hard to help your children learn meal time routines, encourage them to try new things, teach them how to serve themselves and share with others. They also learn to help with preparation and clean up.

If your child has allergies, is on a restricted diet or has medical needs, please let your child's teacher know as soon as possible. In addition, if you have any questions or concerns about dietary or nutritional policies, please let us know.

## **Transportation**

Transportation will be provided by the school district. You will receive a letter in the mail closer to the start of the school year, letting you know pick up/drop off times.

When dropping your child off at the school after 8:00, children must be signed in at the office by an adult.

When picking up children they must be signed out in the school office by an adult. Children will need to be picked up by 2:45 or you will have to wait until after the school buses leave the school.

If someone different is going to pick up your child, the individual picking up your child should be aware that they may be asked to present photo identification.

## **Supplies**

Families should consider a book bag large enough to hold a folder and rest blanket. In addition, a change of clothes, gym shoes and a small rest blanket is requested at the beginning of the school year. These items will be stored in your child's cubby throughout the year. Rest blankets will go home on the last school day of each week to be washed and returned to school. We also ask that anything you send into the classroom be labeled with your child's name. Toys from home are discouraged. Children become upset if they get broken or lost in the classroom.

## **Clothing**

Preschoolers spend their days moving, creating and discovering! Often this means playing on the floor, exploring and making a mess. Play clothes that are easily washed and velcro sneakers are encouraged.

## **Outdoor Play**

We try to play outside whenever possible. Please dress your children for the weather. If it is not raining and the temperature is above 32°F and below 90°F, we are permitted to go outside. Open-toed shoes are hazardous on the playground.

## **Schedule**

A typical school day for your children will look like this:

7:45-8:00 Arrival

8:00-8:30 Breakfast

8:30-8:45 Meeting

8:45-8:55 Large Group

8:55-9:10 Music and Movement

9:15-9:30 Story

9:30-10:20 Free Choice/Small Group

10:20-11:20 Gross Motor

11:20-12:10 Lunch

12:15-12:50 Free Choice/Centers

12:55-1:40 Specials

1:45-2:30 Rest Time

2:30-2:45 Closing

2:45-2:55 Snack

3:04 Dismissal

## **Classroom Expectations**

The parent-home connection is very important, especially when it comes to reinforcing good behavior. Our classroom behavioral expectations are listed below and your child's teacher will refer to these rules and consequences throughout the day.

1. **Walk in school** (Go back to where they started running and practice walking)
2. **Share** (With teacher support, explain reasons for sharing toys and materials)
3. **Hands to yourself** (Moved to a new location in the group)
4. **Treat classroom materials with care** (child will lose the privilege of using those materials for the day)
5. **Use inside voice** (Reminders to use quieter voice)

## **Emergency Closing**

Our district works to ensure the safety of all of our students and staff. On occasion this requires us to open late, close early or close for the entire day, depending upon the severity of the weather. Information on school closings, delayed openings or early dismissals due to weather and/or other emergencies will be announced via the following sources:

1. Our district utilizes an automated emergency text/email notification system. You can sign up for emails/texts on our school website.
2. The school district will have special messages listed on its home page and/or our Facebook page.
3. The following television stations will be notified in the event of a delay/cancellation:

### **Television and Radio Stations**

Brookville WMKX 105.5 FM/WJNG 100.5 FM  
Erie WJET Channel 24  
Clarion WWCH 1300 AM / WCCR 93 (92.7)FM  
Erie FOX Channel 66  
DuBois WOWQ 102 FM/WZDB 95.9 FM  
Erie WICU Channel 12 WQYX 93 FM/ WCPA 900 AM  
Franklin WGYI 98.5 FM  
Erie WSEE Channel 35 WFRA 1450 AM  
Johnstown WJAC Channel 6  
Johnstown WKYE 96.5 FM/ WFGI 95.5 FM  
Penn State WPSU Channel 3 WJHT 92.1 FM /WRKW 99.1 FM  
Pittsburgh KDKA Channel 2 WNTJ 1490 AM / WNTW 990 AM  
Pittsburgh WPXI Channel 11  
Kane WBYB 103.9 FM  
Oil City WKQW 96.3 FM/WUUZ 107.7 WHMJ 99.3  
Penn State WPSU 91.5 FM

### **Website**

[WWW.FORESTAREASCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.FORESTAREASCHOOLS.ORG)

Titusville WTIV 1230 AM [WWW.OPERATIONWEATHERALERT.COM](http://WWW.OPERATIONWEATHERALERT.COM)

Warren WNAE 1310 AM & 96.7 FM WRRN 92.3 FM / WKNB 104.3 FM

In the event of a 2 hour delay your child's school day will run from 9:45 to 3:04. Students will not receive breakfast these days.

In the event of a cancellation, we will be making up the day later in the year. Information on makeup days can be found on the school calendar and reminders will be sent home.

### **Attendance Policy**

Your child's potential for growth and development is maximized through consistent participation in a high quality preschool environment. It is very important that your child attend preschool on a regular basis. We understand that children are susceptible to illness and may miss some days due to illness. Absences due to illness will be considered unexcused absences until an excuse is provided. Please email or talk to your child's teacher when your child is absent. A doctor's excuse is required after 3 consecutive days of absence.

You should also email or talk to your child's teacher if your child is going to be out of school for any other reason. Depending on the circumstances, children who miss 10 days or more may be in danger of losing their preschool slot.

### **Confidentiality**

All information obtained from families enrolled in the Pre-K Counts Program will be kept in confidence. No information regarding your child or family will be released to another agency or individual without the written consent of the parent or guardian.

## **Transitioning into Pre-K Counts Classroom**

### **Registration**

Our school's Pre-K registration will be in April. Registration information can be found in our local newspaper, on the radio station, on the school website and on our Facebook page. Children on the waiting list will be contacted as spaces become available throughout the year.

Upon enrollment all parents are asked to provide:

- A completed Pre-K Counts application
- Birth certificate showing your child is 4 years old before the first day of school (follow district K-enrollment timelines)
- Proof of income
- Proof of residence

Immunization record  
Physical exam and dental form

### **Preparing your child for school**

- \*Make sure your child gets plenty of rest the night before.
- \*Dress appropriately for the weather and play
- \*Can follow a routine
- \*Can sit and listen for the length of a story

### **Pre-K Orientation**

A letter will be mailed out to invite you to our Back to School Night. The week before the school year begins, families and children who have registered for Pre-K are invited to the school to see their classroom, meet their classmates and teachers, ride a school bus and tour the school building. This day is designed to help your child become familiar with his/her school prior to the first day of school.

### **First Day for Pre-K**

On the first day of Pre-K students will come to school from 8:00-1:00. Transportation will be provided. This day is provided to help your child become familiar with the routine of school. Students will gain confidence touring the school, eating in the cafeteria, and playing with classmates while being away from their parents. The school will provide **Lunch** however, students can pack a lunch box if they prefer.

## **Transitioning out of Pre-K Counts Classroom into Kindergarten**

### **Kindergarten Registration**

Students in the Forest Area Pre-K program are enrolled as Forest Area students. As a result, they are transitioned into kindergarten through grade advancement. Kindergarten registration is not necessary.

### **Transition Meetings**

Transition meetings are held for all children who participate in Pre-K Counts programs. If your child receives Early Intervention Services, meetings are set up before the start of kindergarten.

### **Classroom Visits**

Pre-K Counts children have the advantage of being in the building where they will attend kindergarten. They have already met the Principal, Support Staff and Specials Teachers. The Pre-K Counts teacher will coordinate a visit to the Kindergarten classrooms in the spring so that the children can meet the teacher and see where the classroom is in the building. They may even stay for story time or centers so that they can explore their future classroom.

### **Kindergarten Orientation**

A week before the school year begins, families and children who have registered for Kindergarten are invited to the school to see their classroom, meet their teacher and tour the school building. Your Pre-K child will be very familiar with his/her surroundings and can probably lead you on the tour themselves at his point! Still, knowing where they will report on that first day of school, meeting their classmates and teacher will go a long way to help calm any fears that you or they may have.

