



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

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**Statement by Elizabeth Burke Bryant on the release of  
*Votes Count: Legislative Action on  
Pre-K Fiscal Year 2010***

**Providence, RI, October 22, 2009** – The national report, *Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2010*, by The PEW Center on the States applauds Rhode Island for launching the state's first Pre-Kindergarten program. On September 16, 2009, Rhode Island launched a Pre-K Demonstration Program serving 126 children in seven classrooms in four urban communities: Central Falls, Providence, Warwick and Woonsocket. According to the report, the new Rhode Island Pre-K demonstration program removes Rhode Island from the "pre-k wilderness," the designation PEW uses for states that do not have a publicly funded pre-k program.

Research shows that participation in high-quality early learning programs, such as pre-kindergarten, builds a strong foundation that provides children with the social, behavioral and cognitive skills needed for healthy child development and success in school. Children who participate in high-quality early education programs score higher on tests of skills and achievement and develop stronger cognitive, emotional and social skills. Participation in pre-k programs benefits all children and shows strong positive impact on closing the achievement gap that exists between low-income children and their higher income peers.

The Rhode Island Pre-K Demonstration Program incorporates high-quality standards, including requirements that the lead classroom teacher have a bachelor's degree and early childhood teacher certification, that teaching assistants have a Child Development Associate certificate, and that no more than 18 children are in the class. The Rhode Island Pre-K Program takes advantage of our existing community-based infrastructure of programs for young children. One of the demonstration classrooms is operated by a public charter school, one is operated by a Head Start program, and the remainder are operated by private child care and preschool providers. The National Institute of Early Education Research is evaluating the impact of this program on children's academic and social development.

The Pre-K Demonstration Program sites are Progreso Latino/Central Falls School District (Central Falls); Beautiful Beginnings, Highlander Charter School/Mariposa, and Ready to Learn Providence (Providence); Imagine Preschool and Westbay Children's Center (Warwick); and Woonsocket Head Start (Woonsocket).

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety and development of Rhode Island's children.

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