

Early Care and Education

Program Year July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009



Our Children Are At Risk!



Most people would agree our children are our most important future asset. However, in Clarion and Jefferson Counties, young children are at

risk of school failure before they ever get to kindergarten!

In a recent statewide study, Clarion was ranked 33rd out of 67 Pennsylvania Counties in the number of children at risk for school failure based on economic factors, while Jefferson County was ranked 39th; both counties are ranked in the moderately high risk category.

The study looked at the number of children under the age of five, economic statistics from the most recent census and the amount of state and federal funding each county receives, then ranked them from lowest to highest risk.

Of the 2,267 children under the age of five in Clarion County, 45.7% live in low-income families. In Jefferson County, 50% of the 2,542 children under the age of five live in low-income families. Approximately 20% of these children in both counties live below the poverty level (\$22,050 annual income for a family of four).

Other statistics are equally harsh. For example, 11% of Clarion County Children scored below proficient in 3rd grade math PSSA tests and 17.5% scored below proficient in reading. In Jefferson County, 13% scored below proficient in math and 17% scored below proficient in reading.

To help families in Clarion, Jefferson and all of Pennsylvania's Counties, the Department of Public Welfare has implemented "Pennsylvania's Promise for Children." The promise is for all children to have access to quality early education programs and build a strong foundation for school and life success. The prom-

ise is carried out by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), which oversees several programs designed to help disadvantaged and low-wage earning families. Programs include Child Care Works, Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental, Nurse Family Partnership Early Intervention and Keystone STARS. These programs comprise the Early Learning System.

To provide local services through the system, OCDEL allocates \$2,926,211 to Clarion County and \$2,863,176 to Jefferson County organizations that provide services to prepare children for school. The intent is to give children a solid foundation in life-long learning and prevent future expenses associated with a low-skill workforce, drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile probation, incarcerations, domestic violence and other similar crimes.

Note: the statistics contained herein can be found online at www.pakeys.org.

Early Care and Education Project Achievements

Community Action, Inc.'s Early Care and Education Project strives to bring together services and parents to share resources, discuss issues and solve problems.

During fiscal year 2008-2009, the Early Care and Education Project reached all of our goals by:

- Engaging over 1,500 parents through outreach events, parent/teacher meetings, kindergarten trainings and presentations to community groups.
- Engaging all state legislators to visit preschool programs and read to children or meet with staff to share information and resources.
- Engaging civic and business leaders to educate them about local children's programs and how they can benefit the community.
- Engaging newspapers and radio stations to promote children's events and programs.
- Reaching over 1,000 individuals through the One Book Every Young Child Literacy Campaign.



Wendell and Florence Minor visited Brockway's Mengle Memorial Library in April 2009 and read their book, *If You Were A Penguin*, to over 250 children aged birth to Second Grade. Overall, the One Book Every Young Child statewide literacy campaign reached 1,059 children and adults throughout Clarion and Jefferson Counties.

2008-2009: The Year In Pictures



State Senator Mary Jo White and friends enjoyed their *If You Were A Penguin* books after a reading at a Clarion Pre-K Counts site in April 2009.



Representative Sam Smith holds the flag and says the Pledge of Allegiance with Head Start children after reading a story to them in April 2009.

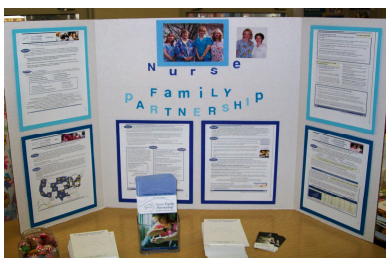


Items kids could win during the Back to School Bingo held in Punxsutawney Area School District in August 2008

The Early Care and Education Project organizes or attends a variety of outreach activities to engage parents, children and the public.

Events range from Back-to-School, One Book Every Young Child Readings, Kids Celebration on Groundhog Day to the Week of the Young Child's Fun in the Sun Event.

This year we reached more than 1,500 children and their parents in both Clarion and Jefferson Counties.



Nurse Family Partnership, which serves low-income first-time moms in Jefferson County, is always present at events.



Twenty-five students from Clarion University's PennAEYC chapter marched in the Autumn Leaf Festival "Kiddie Parade" to share information and show support for early education.



Community Action, Inc. Staff, Dawna Allison, and friends make crafts at AC Valley School District's Family Fun Day in June 2009.



Clarion University President Joseph Grunenwald accepts a certificate of appreciation from the children in the University's Earl Siler Center after reading *If You Were A Penguin* to them during the One Book Every Young Child statewide literacy campaign in April 2009.



Rayna Hoke, Jefferson-Clarion Pre-K Counts, and Dr. Suellen Gourley, Clarion Area Elementary School, enjoying a chat during the Clarion Fun in the Sun event in April 2009 to celebrate Week of the Young Child.

Download the *Kindergarten Get Ready!* Calendar of Activities and other parent resources at www.jccap.org/newer/EarlyCareEducationProject.asp

School Transition: A Time of Change For Everyone

In an effort to help parents and children prepare for kindergarten, Community to School Transition Councils were established or renewed in AC Valley, Brookville, Punxsutawney and Clarion Area/Clarion Limestone School Districts. Each council, which included school district and community-based early education programs, developed a district-specific school transition plan then organized activities to help children and their families become familiar with kindergarten classrooms.

The Early Care and Education Project partnered with Jefferson-Clarion Head Start and Pre-K Counts to facilitate parent trainings within each district to ease parents concerns and help them become familiar with school personnel and practices.

Additionally, 35% of Keystone STARS, Pre-K Counts and Head Start centers visited the kindergarten classroom in their district's elementary school.



Dr. Jocelynn Smrekar and Dr. Louann Bonnett, two Clarion University's Early Education Faculty, joined more than 50 children's service providers to participate in a family activity during the 4C Summit for Clarion County Child Care-givers. This event was held in December 2008 to help providers coordinate early education and child care programs in Clarion County.



On June 9, 2009, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Gerald Zahorchak (far right) visited DuBois to promote the State's quality education initiatives. Before boarding the "Government on Wheels" bus, he met with Nancy Lombardo, Clearfield County Community Engagement Group representative; Linda Smith and Paula Quick, co-owners of Playhouse Children's Center and representatives of Jefferson County Community Engagement; and Eugene Kephart, Cen-Clear Child Services, Inc.

Goals for 2009-2010

During fiscal year 2009-2010, the Early Care and Education Project will strengthen relationships with local and state legislators, businesses, media, parents and school districts. Specifically, we will:

- Engage parents by distributing kindergarten readiness resources at outreach events, PTA/PTO meetings, back-to-school and Kindergarten registrations.
- Conduct media outreach by distributing news articles, conducting radio interviews and releasing public service announcements.
- Educate local business leaders and encourage them to share early education resources with their employees.
- Invite all local and state policy makers to participate in literacy events and visit early education facilities.
- Develop Community to School Transition Councils in Brockway, New Bethlehem and Union School Districts to ensure a council exists in each school district in Clarion and Jefferson Counties.
- Distribute a minimum of 1,000 *Kindergarten Get Ready!* activity calendars to parents of pre-school children.

Every child is Pennsylvania's future

Quality early learning and child development play a major role in a child's future success in school and in life.

Young children learn best when they have proper health and nutrition, a safe and stable family and home life, and activities that stimulate creativity, curiosity, and all the skills they will need to succeed in school and life.

Here are ways you can help our children reach their promise!

- Sign our declaration to support Pennsylvania's Promise for Children.
- Learn simple ways that you can support learning in the young children in your life.
- Talk to child care programs in your neighborhood about Keystone STARS.
- Ask your employer to provide resources on quality early learning opportunities.

For more info, visit papromiseforchildren.com or contact Community Action, Inc.'s Early Care and Education Project at 814-938-3302 x244 or 800-648-3381 x 244.

Pennsylvania's Promise for Children
Because every child is Pennsylvania's future
www.papromiseforchildren.com



Community Action, Inc. — Helping People. Changing Lives.

What Services Are Available To Make Our Communities Stronger?

Clarion County:

- 5 private nurseries and preschools (separate from child care, Head Start, Pre-K Counts and Intermediate Unit)
 - 14 family day cares can serve 84 kids
 - 9 group day cares can serve 108 kids
 - 10 child care centers can serve 640 kids
- Registered/certified child care service available to 832 kids

Of these child care providers, there is/are:

- 1 Keystone STARS Star 4 accredited facility
- 3 Keystone STARS Star 3 facilities
- 3 Keystone STARS Star 2 facilities
- 9 Keystone STARS Star 1 facilities
- 16 of 34 (47%) known child care providers are Keystone STARS participants

Other Programs Include:

- 212 children served in Early Intervention (birth to age three) projects
- 0 families served by the Nurse Family Partnership Project
- Child Care Works served 184 children (aged birth through kindergarten)

Bi-County:

262 children are enrolled in 14 Head Start classrooms and 1 home-based program

198 children enrolled in 11 Pre-K Counts classrooms

517 children enrolled in 12 Early Intervention classrooms

These three pre-school programs reached 977 of 4,809 children under the age of five years. That's only half of age appropriate children!

Jefferson County:

- 8 private nurseries and preschools (separate from child care, Head Start, Pre-K Counts and Intermediate Unit)
 - 17 family day cares can serve 102 kids
 - 4 group day cares can serve 48 kids
 - 6 child care centers can serve 427 kids
- Registered/certified child care service available to 577 kids

Of these child care providers, there is/are:

- 1 Keystone STARS Star 4 facility
- 0 Keystone STARS Star 3 facilities
- 8 Keystone STARS Star 2 facilities
- 8 Keystone STARS Star 1 facilities
- 17 of 27 (63%) known child care providers are Keystone STARS participants

Other Programs Include:

- 102 children served in Early Intervention (birth to age three) projects
- 44 families served by the Nurse Family Partnership Project
- Child Care Works served 235 children (aged birth through kindergarten)



Community Action, Inc.

(Serving Clarion and Jefferson Counties)

Community Action, Inc's Early Care and Education Project

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Visit us online at www.jccap.org

Community Action, Inc. was established and incorporated in 1965 as a 501(c)(3) Pennsylvania private, non-profit corporation. We are a lead provider of a wide-range of services in Clarion and Jefferson Counties.

Our Mission

To provide and coordinate activities which alleviate poverty, promote family self-sufficiency and advance community prosperity.

Early Care and Education Project Mission

Bring together parents, child service groups and others to help improve our children's quality of life by supporting and promoting early care and education.

Join us at our next meeting! For meeting dates and times, contact us via email at tweaver@jccap.org or by phone at 814-938-3302, ext. 244

Community Partners:

Melissa Anderson, Union Schools
Jodi Askins, PennAEYC
Andrea Baker, Jefferson-Clarion Head Start
Steven Berfield, Jefferson-Clarion Head Start
Dr. Luanne Bonnet, Clarion University
Erin Cameron, Family Child Care
Kelly Carpino, Jefferson-Clarion Head Start
Barb Cherico, Clarion County Mental Retardation
Bibiana Chestnut, Penn State University
Cindy Cornwell, Jefferson County Children & Youth
Michelle Confer, Brookville Schools
Susan DeV Vaughn, Punxsutawney Schools
Mary Faulk, Clarion-Limestone Schools
Barbara Fortunato, Brockway Schools
Lori Fulton, Jefferson County Department of Health
Dr. Suellen Gourley, Clarion Area Schools
Susan Groner, Clarion County Department of Health
Linda Heath, Keystone Schools
Rayna Hoke, Jefferson-Clarion Pre-K Counts
Jan Huffman, Clarion-Limestone Schools
Jason Huffman, Redbank Valley Schools
Pat Jones, Community Action, Inc. (CCIS)
Amy Kaltenbach, Clarion County Early Intervention
Cheryl Kennedy, Noah's Kids Child Care
Deborah Kelley, Riverview Intermediate Unit

Kerry Kifer, Clarion County Mental Health
Darlene Kovacs, Northwest Regional Key
Lisa Kray, Parent to Parent - Northwest
Tammy Liebert, Crayon Castle Child Care
Valerie Liebert, Crayon Castle Child Care
Larry McGuire, Punxsutawney Spirit Newspaper
Erin McLaughlin, Play and Learn Preschool
Carrie Philips, Clarion County ARC
John Pozza, Northwest Regional Key
Ruth Rowan, Clearfield-Jefferson Early Intervention
Terri Rhodes, Riverview Intermediate Unit
Thelma Rhoades, Keystone SMILES
Paula Quick, Playhouse Children's Center
Linda Schaffer, Interim Healthcare
Melissa Schmader, Jefferson-Clarion Head Start
Dr. Jocelyn Smrekar, Clarion University
Annette Smith, Women, Infants and Children
Linda Smith, Playhouse Children's Center
Shirl Smith, Cen-Clear Child Services
Denise Storer, Creative Kids Learning Center
Barbara Thompson, Clarion Free Library
Tracy Weaver, Community Action, Inc.
Lisa Weyand, Northwest Regional Key
Reese Wilson, Clarion University Siler Center
Jennifer Whitesell, Nurse Family Partnership
Mary Wolf, Clarion-Limestone Schools