



Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry

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Getting Workforce Development Done: Shapiro Administration Highlights Nearly \$400K Investment to Expand Early Childhood Education Pre-Apprenticeship Program in Philadelphia

The Shapiro Administration's nearly \$400,000 investment last fall enabled Philadelphia Academies Inc., in partnership with Parkway West High School, to launch its expanded Early Childhood Education Pre-Apprenticeship program.

By increasing annual funding for workforce development by nearly \$65 million since taking office, Governor Josh Shapiro is addressing workforce shortages and setting Pennsylvania's workforce up for success for generations to come.





Philadelphia, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Nancy A. Walker joined **Philadelphia Academies Inc. (PAI)** and state and local leaders Tuesday evening to highlight nearly \$400,000 in state funding that allowed PAI to expand its Early Childhood Education (ECE) Pre-Apprenticeship program, in partnership with **Parkway West High School (PWHS)**.

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has made workforce development a cornerstone of his agenda. The Shapiro Administration has increased annual funding for workforce development initiatives statewide – including apprenticeships, career and technical education (CTE), and vocational-technical programs – by nearly \$65 million over its first two budgets, a more than 50 percent increase over funding in the 2022-23 budget. The [2024-25 bipartisan budget](#) also included a first-time investment of \$2 million in nursing registered apprenticeship programs to help fill critical nursing positions across the Commonwealth.

As part of a [\\$3.9 million investment in pre-apprenticeship opportunities for Pennsylvania high school students](#), the Shapiro Administration awarded PAI \$399,132 last fall. With this investment, PAI is now launching an expanded version of its program, which includes a cohort of Black male students, with a focus on widening educational supports, addressing educational and racial inequities, and empowering young people through employment and leadership. Tuesday evening's ceremony celebrated the new chapter and made clear how Governor Shapiro's targeted investments in workforce development are making real impacts and supporting growth for organizations doing important work across the Commonwealth.

"Through this investment, the Shapiro Administration is not only supporting PAI's work to train the next generation of early education workers who will shape the minds of Pennsylvania's

youngest learners, but we're also taking important strides to address the teacher shortage and open up the doors of opportunity for those who have too often been left behind," said **Secretary Walker**. "When Pennsylvania supports pre-apprenticeship programs like this one, we are building a bridge between education and the workforce, offering students hands-on training that directly aligns with industry needs, and empowering the next generation with the skills and opportunities they need to thrive in today's economy."

Pre-apprenticeship programs provide the necessary instruction, preparation, and supports to help individuals gain the skills they need to succeed in applying for a full apprenticeship program. These programs are linked with existing apprenticeship programs, creating a pipeline of qualified workers to fill open positions.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that, on average, apprentices earn a starting wage of \$80,000 per year after graduation and are on track to earn \$300,000 more over their careers compared to workers who do not graduate from an apprenticeship program. For every dollar spent on apprenticeships, employers get an average of \$1.47 back in increased productivity.

Since Governor Shapiro took office, L&I's Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO) has supported the enrollment of more than 11,780 new apprentices, as well as the creation of more than 70 new registered apprenticeship programs and more than 40 pre-apprenticeship programs in Pennsylvania.

PAI's ECE pre-apprenticeship was approved in 2019 and has continued to grow throughout the years. During the 2023-24 school year, every enrolled pre-apprentice completed an in-school internship, and 100 percent of participating seniors successfully finished their Early Childhood Portfolio for Childhood Development Association (CDA) testing.

"This investment in our expanded Early Childhood Education program demonstrates that pre-apprenticeships can be more than just a stepping stone," said **PAI's President & CEO F. Christopher Groins**. "We are building a future where aspiring Black educators not only see themselves in the classroom, but are empowered to lead, inspire, and shape the next generation of students with confidence and purpose."

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