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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

More at Four
Pre-Kindergarten Program

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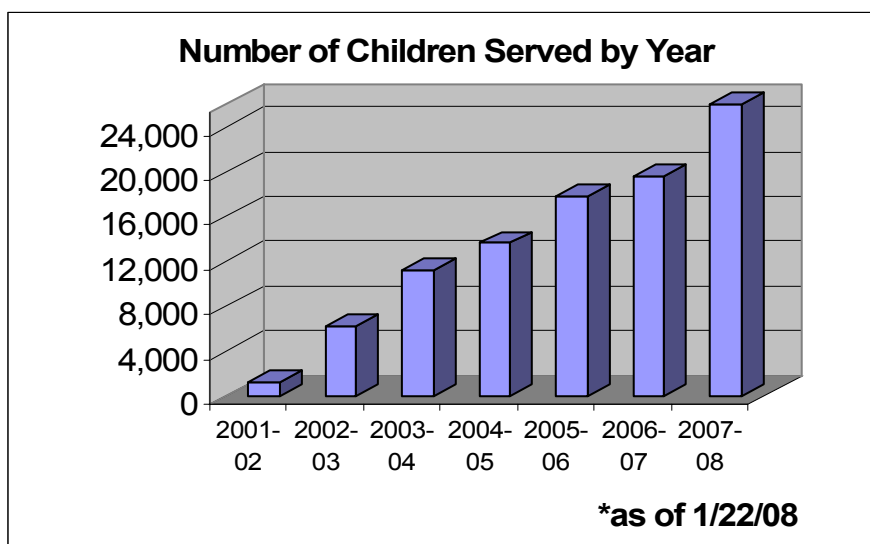
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Pre-kindergarten for North Carolina's at-risk four-year-olds

More at Four is North Carolina's state-funded pre-kindergarten program to prepare at-risk four-year-olds for success in school. Pre-kindergarten is a research-proven strategy for school readiness. Without this opportunity, the young children served by More at Four would enter kindergarten less prepared for school success and lagging behind their peers.

More at Four has served 27,674 children in SFY 2007-08, as of January 22, 2008. The program is available in all 100 counties. Children served have factors that put them at risk of school failure, with family income as the primary risk factor, and will be entering kindergarten the following year.



More at Four's goal is to first reach those at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved. Among the children served in SFY 2007-08, as of January 22, 73 percent were unserved when enrolled and almost 56 percent had never been served in any preschool or child care setting.

Children's language, literacy, math and social skills are improving substantially

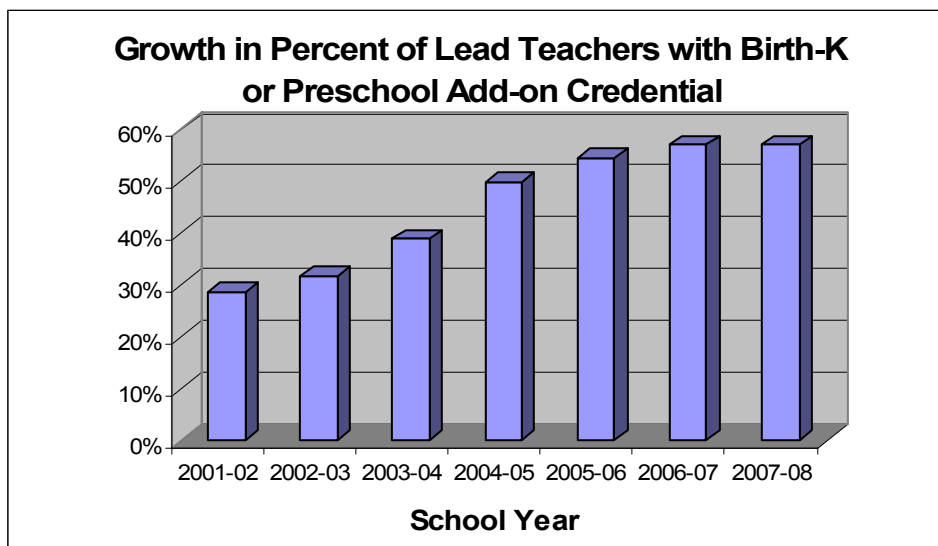
The independent evaluation of More at Four conducted by FPG Child Development Institute for 2003-2007, examined children's growth over time from the beginning of the More at Four pre-k program through the end of kindergarten for two cohorts of children (2003-04 MAF children and 2005-06 MAF children). The results reported in the Year 6 Report (published January 2008) indicated that children exhibited substantial developmental growth throughout this time period across all skill areas - language/literacy, math, general cognitive knowledge, and social skills. The evaluation reports that its "findings are consistent with a number of other large-

scale studies that have found that pre-k participation was associated with sustained gains in language/literacy, math and social skills as well as greater gains for children at greater risk." (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2008)

A commitment to high quality

More at Four is recognized as one of the two highest-quality state pre-kindergarten programs nationally by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), by meeting ten of ten pre-k quality benchmarks. More at Four's high-quality program standards include licensed teachers with specialized training and ongoing professional development, small class size, staff-to-child ratio, research-based and comprehensive curricula and a focus on the whole child and family.

Over 57 percent of More at Four lead teachers now hold a Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) license, Preschool Add-on license or provisional B-K license, as standards require, up from 28.6 percent in 2002-03. Furthermore, 81.3 percent hold at least a bachelor's degree. Teachers not meeting the standard are required to work toward licensure and are supported as they further their education. More at Four provides funding to the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project to provide scholarships for teachers and teacher assistants, as well as to support health insurance costs for some teachers.



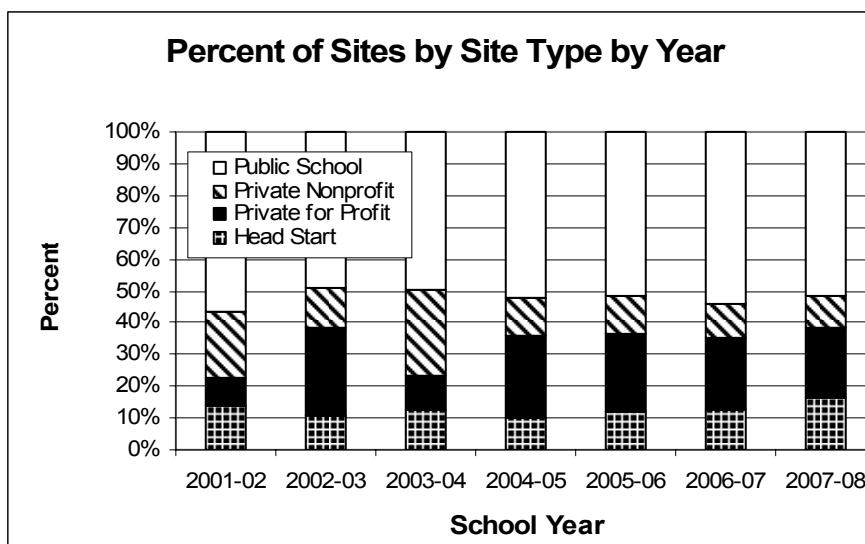
The North Carolina Office of School Readiness (OSR) continues to provide extensive, ongoing professional development and technical assistance for local More at Four programs to promote ongoing quality improvement. In 2006-07, the Teacher Licensure Unit was created to offer comprehensive support to teachers in the private sector working to obtain a Birth-Kindergarten teaching license. Currently, in excess of 200 private child care teachers are enrolled in OSR's Beginning Teacher Support Program, ensuring rigorous teacher licensure requirements are being met regardless of program setting.

Professional development workshops available throughout the 2007-08 year cover the following topics: curricula, developmental screening, inquiry-based science, outdoor learning, and *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. Also this year, over 1,200 More at Four teachers and administrators attended the NCaeyc/OSR-More at Four 2007 Annual Study Conference. In addition to numerous workshops, this conference provided a pre-conference session for More at Four teachers that focused in-depth on intentional instruction in the early childhood classroom.

Collaboration for school readiness

More at Four fosters coordination and collaboration within North Carolina's early care and education system. Communities develop collaborative plans for implementing More at Four classrooms locally, with shared leadership from Smart Start and the public schools and broad representation from early childhood service providers. At the state and local levels, More at Four works closely with Smart Start, the public schools, Head Start, licensed child care providers, the Division of Child Development, services for children with disabilities ages birth to five, and other relevant programs to create a more coordinated system of early care and education services.

Local communities implement More at Four pre-kindergarten classrooms in a variety of sites, including public schools, licensed for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, and Head Start programs, according to locally determined needs and resources.



The NC Office of School Readiness

The North Carolina Office of School Readiness (OSR) provides funding, policy development and planning, standards, professional development and technical assistance to support the provision of high-quality pre-kindergarten and preschool programs locally and to better coordinate and integrate all state and federally-funded preschool programs. The OSR supports preschool programs in both public schools and licensed child care centers.

Created in 2005 and placed administratively in the Department of Public Instruction effective July 1, 2006, the OSR has become an integral part of North Carolina's education system reflecting the understanding that early childhood programs must have integral relationships with and transitions to public schools. It advances our vision for North Carolina around school readiness - where all children are ready for success in school and all schools are ready for all children.

More at Four financial information

Ninety-five percent of state appropriations for More at Four support classroom operations. The average state operating cost per slot is \$4,450 per year, about half the cost of high-quality pre-k. At the local level, communities contribute other resources to support the full cost of serving children in a high-quality program (these resources are typically underreported, especially in-kind resources.) State funds also help enhance teacher quality, through scholarships and professional development.

Table I. More at Four Budget for SFY 2007-08, as of December 16, 2007¹

Budget Category	Budgeted Amount	% of Total
Classroom Start-Up (one-time allocation)	6,501,329	4.6 %
Classroom Operations	127,062,935	90.3 %
Subtotal - Classroom Funds	133,564,264	94.9%
T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarships	1,938,000	1.5%
Professional Development	1,294,743	.9%
External Evaluation and Database	916,665	.6%
Administrative Costs	2,922,037	2.1%
Transferred to Subsidy ²	--	--
Total Budget	140,635,709	100 %

¹ Actual expenditures are unknown until the end of the state fiscal year.

² Legislation requires that any funds for slots unfilled by Jan. 31 shall be transferred to child care subsidy.

**Table II. Estimated Other Resources Supporting More at Four at the Local Level
Projected for SFY 2007-08, as reported as of December 16, 2007³**

Type of Funds	Projected Amount	% of Total
Smart Start ⁴	\$14,906,727	27%
Pre-School Disabilities	\$3,448,279	6%
Subsidy	\$2,792,568	5%
Head Start	\$10,286,241	19%
Title I	\$8,217,630	15%
City/County Appropriations	\$8,416,931	15%
Other	\$7,403,682	13%
Total	\$ 55,472,058	100 %

A smart investment for progress in education

More at Four has grown over six years to serve more children every year and is effectively reaching its target at-risk population. By providing a nationally recognized high-quality program, More at Four is enabling these at-risk children to achieve significant growth over the school year in language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge and behavioral skills — skills that prepare them to do well in kindergarten. These children would enter kindergarten at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers without this opportunity.

Our state's commitment to high-quality pre-kindergarten also benefits children beyond those who are funded by More at Four. With 1,991 classrooms across the state currently, the reach is wide. The programs that participate in More at Four, whether public schools, licensed child care or Head Start, commit to high standards and ongoing quality improvement, and over 21 percent of children served in those classrooms are funded by sources other than More at Four.

Furthermore, progress continues in the effort to expand high-quality pre-kindergarten opportunities through the creation and implementation of common *North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program Standards* across settings and auspices. These standards are modeled on the More at Four standards and support the implementation of *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. The Office of School Readiness and the Division of Child Development have partnered to implement a process to provide special state recognition to classrooms serving four-year-olds that meet the state standards, regardless of funding sources supporting those classrooms. Scheduled to be piloted in spring of 2008, the

³ Actual expenditures of other resources accessed at the local level are unknown until the end of the state fiscal year. These resources are typically underreported, especially in-kind resources.

⁴ Other resources accessed from Smart Start in SFY 2006-07 represent the budgeted amounts as reported by More at Four contractors. Smart Start budgeted contributions may also be reported under subsidy.

recognition will be available to programs for four-year-olds in all early childhood education settings - including public schools, Head Start and child care. The recognition will help spotlight high-quality pre-k throughout the state and provide important information for families and communities.

With over six years of investment in a state-funded pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds, the program is proving successful. Yet, significant challenges remain for the program's future. Foremost among those challenges is a sustainable system of funding. While the state provides about half of the full cost of a high-quality pre-kindergarten program, local communities continue to face increasing funding challenges as the program expands and as local resources available to support the full cost of the program are increasingly stretched. Legislative changes for SFY 2007-08, including a 10 percent per slot funding increase and special provision language allowing counties with "a documented lack of available resources" to appeal to the Office of School Readiness for a higher reimbursement rate, have proved beneficial to program growth. However, long-term sustainability of the program will likely require additional or alternate funding strategies. As the program matures, the Department of Public Instruction is committed to examining the options available to ensure the longevity of this vital investment in the future of North Carolina and its children.

2003-07 More at Four Evaluation Highlights

The most recent evaluation of the program (published January, 2008) describes findings on the quality of the program and the longitudinal outcomes for two separate cohorts of children over the pre-k and kindergarten years. Specifically, this evaluation identifies:

- Key characteristics of the local More at Four programs and to what extent they have changed over time,
- The quality of the More at Four pre-k and kindergarten programs attended by children, and
- The longitudinal outcomes from pre-k through kindergarten for children who attended More at Four.

Characteristics and Population Served

The evaluation findings for the More at Four Pre-K Program for 2003-07 show that even as the program has grown substantially each year, it has maintained the provision of services in accord with the program guidelines. Moreover, the program has continued to serve the target population, high-risk and unserved children who are likely to benefit from such an intervention.

Outcomes

Children served have exhibited significant growth from pre-k through kindergarten in multiple skill areas. These findings are consistent with other large-scale studies that have found pre-k participation to be associated with sustained gains as well as greater gains for children at greater risk.

- Skill areas include language and literacy (receptive language, rhyming, story and print concepts, naming letters), math measures (applied problems, counting task), general knowledge measures (color knowledge, social awareness), and the social skills measure.
- The most at-risk students continue to make the most gains. However, the gap in skills, while narrowing, is not closed.
- For Spanish speaking children, growth occurred for skills assessed in both English and Spanish.
- The quality of pre-kindergarten classrooms was significantly higher than kindergarten classrooms for the each cohort served. Yet, children exhibited continued growth throughout the kindergarten year suggesting that the pre-k experience prepared these at-risk children for school success.

In sum, "these findings suggest that experiences such as those provided in the More at Four Program may offer an important and ameliorative experience for children who otherwise may not have such opportunities in the pre-k year" (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2008).

Other Resources Accessed by Contractor

More at Four Program, FY 2007-08 (as of 1/22/08)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Alamance-Burlington School System	386	356	X	X	X	X		X	
Alexander County Partnership for Children	111	114	X		X	X		X	X
Alleghany County Schools	58	59		X	X	X			X
Anson County Partnership for Children	180	168		X	X				
Ashe County School System	148	152	X	X		X	X	X	
Avery County Public Schools	104	92		X		X			X
Beaufort/Hyde Partnership for Children	135	143			X				X
Bertie County Schools	172	106		X	X				X
Bladen County Schools	292	302		X			X		X
Brunswick County Partnership for Children	395	384	X	X	X	X	X		X
Buncombe County Partnership for Children	288	320	X	X	X	X		X	
Burke County Partnership for Children	452	473	X		X	X			X
Cabarrus County Partnership for Children	410	435			X		X		X
Caldwell County Smart Start	126	125			X		X	X	X
Northeastern Community Development Corp. (Camden)	36	38			X				X
Carteret County Schools	135	138		X				X	
Caswell County Schools	83	76		X			X		X
Catawba County Partnership for Children	242	250		X	X	X	X		X
Chatham County Partnership for Children	253	241		X	X				X
Edenton-Chowan Board of Education	45	47					X		
Cleveland County Partnership for Children	505	561		X	X	X		X	
Columbus County Schools	399	407				X	X		X
Craven County Board of Education	154	156		X	X		X	X	X
Cumberland County Partnership for Children	2,093	1,610			X		X	X	X
Currituck County Schools	34	35							X
Dare County Schools	90	92		X			X		
Davidson County Partnership for Children	369	382		X		X	X		X
Davie County Schools	159	174		X		X		X	X
Duplin County Schools	157	168		X	X	X		X	X
Durham Partnership for Children	388	386		X	X			X	
Smart Start of Forsyth County	610	588		X	X			X	
Franklin/Granville/Vance Partnership	90	92			X				X
Gaston County Schools	860	869	X		X		X		X
Gates County Board of Education	39	39	X			X			X
Granville County Schools	150	135			X		X		X
Guilford County Partnership for Children, Inc.	1,918	2,002		X	X			X	
Halifax Warren SmartStart Partnership for Children	319	318		X	X				X

More at Four Program, FY 2007-08 (as of 1/22/08)									
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Harnett County Partnership for Children	208	252			X				
Henderson County Partnership for Children	139	153	X		X			X	X
Hertford County Public Schools	117	117		X		X		X	X
Hoke County Schools	257	259		X	X		X		
Hyde County Schools	36	36				X			X
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children	249	265	X		X				
Partnership for Children of Johnston County	433	452			X				X
Jones County Partnership for Children	74	75		X	X	X			
Lee County Partnership for Children	304	280		X	X	X	X		
Lenoir-Greene Partnership for Children	333	340			X				
Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Co.	221	218							X
Community Action Opportunities (Madison County)	40	42						X	X
Martin County Schools	73	74		X		X			
McDowell County Schools	185	182	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	1,706	1,890			X				X
Intermountain Children (Mitchell County)	53	69							X
Montgomery County Partnership for Children	240	239	X		X				X
Moore County Schools	47	48			X				
Down East Partnership for Children (Nash/Edgecombe)	532	561	X	X	X		X		X
New Hanover County Schools	594	629		X	X	X	X	X	X
Northampton County Schools	144	136		X	X	X		X	
Onslow County Schools	664	341		X		X		X	X
Orange County Partnership for Young Children	161	170	X		X			X	
Pamlico County Schools	57	59				X	X		X
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	107	108		X					
Pender County Schools	125	133		X	X			X	
Perquimans County Schools	45	45		X		X			X
Person County Partnership for Children	109	115		X	X			X	
Pitt County Public Schools	403	378		X					
Polk County Schools	100	105		X			X	X	
Randolph County Partnership for Children	296	288			X		X		
Region A Partnership for Children (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain Counties)	559	583	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Richmond County Schools	241	250			X	X	X	X	
Public Schools of Robeson County	1,000	1,032	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rockingham County Partnership for Children, Inc.	284	294			X		X		
Rowan Partnership for Children	248	246			X				X
Rutherford County Schools	291	291						X	X

More at Four Program, FY 2007-08 (as of 1/22/08)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Sampson County Partnership for Children	371	403			X		X		
Scotland County Schools	231	264		X			X		X
Stanly County School System	297	272		X		X	X		
Stokes Partnership for Children, Inc.	255	238		X		X	X	X	X
Surry County Early Childhood Partnership, Inc.	264	283	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transylvania County Schools	60	65		X			X	X	
Tyrrell County Schools	18	18			X	X	X		
Union County Public Schools	467	419	X				X		X
Vance County Schools	114	123		X	X	X	X		
Wake County SmartStart	970	1,031			X				
Washington County Schools	100	102		X		X	X		X
Watauga County Schools	106	115	X	X	X	X	X		X
The Partnership for Children of Wayne County, Inc.	630	672	X		X		X	X	X
Wilkes County Schools	512	533		X	X	X		X	X
Wilson County Partnership for Children	216	136	X		X				X
Yadkin County Schools	158	165			X			X	X
Region D Child Care, Inc. (Yancey County)	52	47	X						
TOTAL	27,881	27,674	22	50	59	37	39	35	55