

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: More at Four Progress Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Type of Executive Summary:

- Action
- Action on First Reading
- Discussion
- Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
- General Statute # _____
- SBE Policy # _____
- SBE Policy Amendment
- SBE Policy (New)
- APA # _____
- APA Amendment
- APA (New)
- Other House Bill 1473, Section 7.24 (c)

Presenter(s): Mr. John Pruette (Executive Director, Office of School Readiness)

Description:

SECTION 7.24.(c) of House Bill 1473 requires the Department of Public Instruction to submit an annual report on the status of the state-funded pre-kindergarten program "More at Four" to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, and the Fiscal Research Division. The report is due by February 1, 2008.

Resources:

State

Input Process:

Information collected from the More at Four Reporting System (MAFPLAN and MAFKIDS) and the annual external evaluation of the More at Four Program conducted by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute were used to complete this report.

Stakeholders:

Early care and education system (public and private), K-12 public education system, State of North Carolina

Timeline For Action:

N/A

Recommendations:

N/A

Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)
Specify: _____
- Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)
Specify: _____
- Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

Motion By: _____

Seconded By: _____

Vote: Yes _____ No _____

Abstain _____

Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Postponed _____ Revised _____

*Person responsible for SBE agenda materials and SBE policy updates: Jamie Woodlief, 919-981-5300



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

More at Four
Pre-Kindergarten Program

*Session Law 2007-323 and Section
7.24*

(House Bill 1473)

Date Due: February 1, 2008

Report #: 35

DPI Chronological Schedule, 2006-2007

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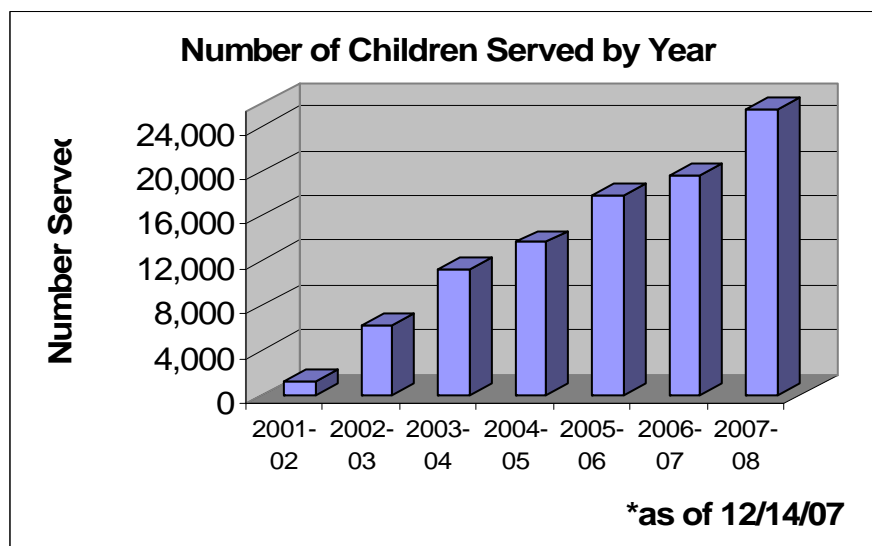
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Pre-kindergarten for North Carolina's at-risk four-year-olds

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 25,445 children in SFY 2007-08, as of December 16, 2007. 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 December 14, 88 percent were unserved when enrolled and almost 60 percent had never been served in any preschool or child care setting.

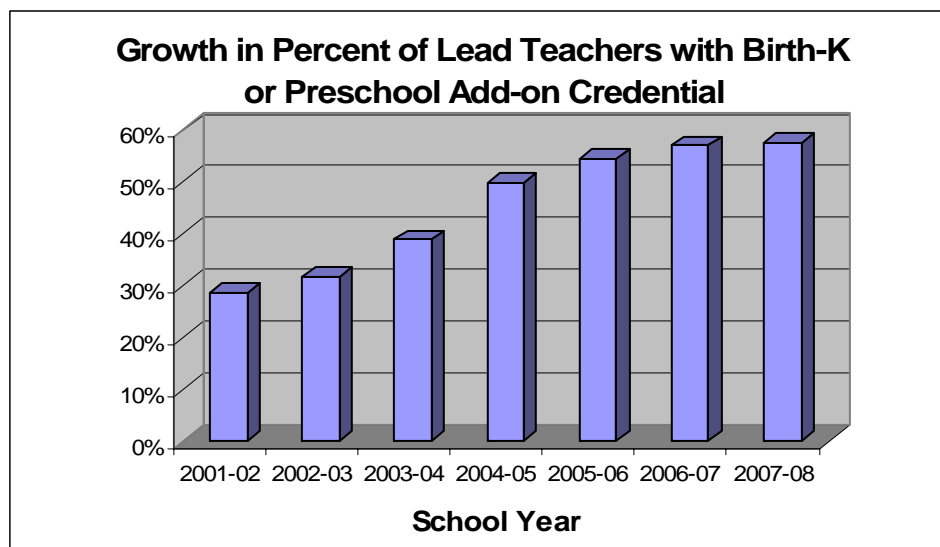
Children's language, literacy, math and social skills are improving substantially

The More at Four Year 6 Report conducted by FPG Child Development Institute and published January, 2008, 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 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 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 57.8 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, 81.6 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.

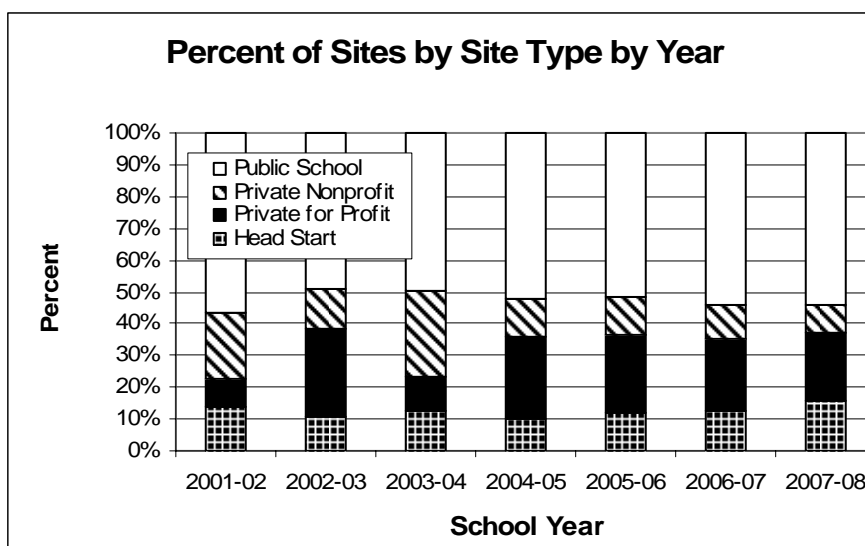
Professional development workshops available throughout the 2007-08 year cover the following topics: curricula, developmental screening, inquiry-based science, outdoor learning, and *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. Also this year, over 1,200 More at Four teachers 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

Over 95 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 %

Table II. Estimated Other Resources Supporting More at Four at the Local Level Projected for SFY 2006-07, as reported as of December 16, 2007³

Type of Funds	Projected Amount	% of Total
Smart Start ⁴	\$14,449,754	27%

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.

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.

Pre-School Disabilities	\$3,418,178	7%
Subsidy	\$2,982,060	6%
Head Start	\$9,656,071	18%
Title I	\$7,974,956	15%
City/County Appropriations	\$9,233,156	17%
Other	\$5,139,827	10%
Total	\$ 52,854,002	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 1,830 classrooms across the state, 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 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% 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.

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 12/14/07)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Apprpr	Head Start	Other
Alamance-Burlington School System	386	305	X	X	X	X		X	
Alexander County Partnership for Children	109	43	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	146	149	X	X		X	X	X	
Avery County Public Schools	104	91		X		X			X
Beaufort/Hyde Partnership for Children	135	141			X				X
Bertie County Schools	172	106		X	X				X
Bladen County Schools	292	267		X			X		X
Brunswick County Partnership for Children	395	302	X	X	X	X	X		X
Buncombe County Partnership for Children	288	304	X	X	X	X		X	
Burke County Partnership for Children	452	468	X		X	X			X
Cabarrus County Partnership for Children	410	424			X		X		X
Caldwell County Smart Start	126	116			X		X	X	X
NE Community Development Corp. (Camden)	36	38			X				X
Carteret County Schools	135	136		X				X	
Caswell County Schools	83	75		X			X		X
Catawba County Partnership for Children	241	242		X	X	X	X		X
Chatham County Partnership for Children	253	206		X	X				X
Edenton-Chowan Board of Education	45	46					X		
Cleveland County Partnership for Children	505	552		X	X	X		X	
Columbus County Schools	399	299				X	X		X
Craven County Board of Education	154	144		X	X		X	X	X
Cumberland County Partnership for Children	2,093	1,445			X		X	X	X
Currituck County Schools	34	35							X
Dare County Schools	90	37		X			X		
Davidson County Partnership for Children	369	372		X		X	X		X
Davie County Schools	159	172		X		X		X	X
Duplin County Schools	157	163		X	X	X		X	X
Durham Partnership for Children	388	362		X	X			X	
Smart Start of Forsyth County	560	582		X	X			X	
Franklin/Granville/Vance Partnership	90	56			X				X
Gaston County Schools	860	848	X		X		X		X
Gates County Board of Education	46	37	X			X			X
Granville County Schools	150	91			X		X		X
Guilford County Partnership for Children, Inc.	1,918	1,930		X	X			X	
Halifax Warren SmartStart Partnership for Children	319	317		X	X				X

More at Four Program, FY 2007-08 (as of 12/14/07)									
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Approprr	Head Start	Other
Harnett County Partnership for Children	268	244			X				
Henderson County Partnership for Children	144	152	X		X			X	X
Hertford County Public Schools	117	113		X		X		X	X
Hoke County Schools	252	192		X	X		X		
Hyde County Schools	36	36				X			X
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children	249	260	X		X				
Partnership for Children of Johnston County	421	435			X				X
Jones County Partnership for Children	74	75		X	X	X			
Lee County Partnership for Children	304	257		X	X	X	X		
Lenoir-Greene Partnership for Children	333	340			X				
Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Co.	221	209							X
Community Action Opportunities (Madison Co.)	40	40						X	X
Martin County Schools	73	74		X		X			
McDowell County Schools	185	163	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	1,706	1,809			X				X
Intermountain Children (Mitchell County)	53	67							X
Montgomery County Partnership for Children	240	234	X		X				X
Moore County Schools	47	48			X				
Down East Partnership for Children (Nash/Edgecombe)	532	549	X	X	X		X		X
New Hanover County Schools	594	624		X	X	X	X	X	X
Northampton County Schools	144	134		X	X	X		X	
Onslow County Schools	664	54		X		X		X	X
Orange County Partnership for Young Children	161	162	X		X			X	
Pamlico County Schools	57	58				X	X		X
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	107	107		X					
Pender County Schools	125	130		X	X			X	
Perquimans County Schools	45	45		X		X			X
Person County Partnership for Children	109	114		X	X			X	
Pitt County Public Schools	403	325		X					
Polk County Schools	100	105		X			X	X	
Randolph County Partnership for Children	316	281			X		X		
Region A Partnership for Children (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain Counties)	510	476	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Richmond County Schools	241	248			X	X	X	X	
Public Schools of Robeson County	781	669	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rockingham Co. Partnership for Children, Inc.	284	294			X		X		
Rowan Partnership for Children	248	237			X				X
Rutherford County Schools	291	277						X	X

More at Four Program, FY 2007-08 (as of 12/14/07)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropr	Head Start	Other
Sampson County Partnership for Children	371	398			X		X		
Scotland County Schools	180	213		X			X		X
Stanly County School System	297	242		X		X	X		
Stokes Partnership for Children, Inc.	255	237		X		X	X	X	X
Surry County Early Childhood Partnership, Inc.	264	281	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transylvania County Schools	60	62		X			X	X	
Tyrrell County Schools	18	18			X	X	X		
Union County Public Schools	467	408	X				X		X
Vance County Schools	114	92		X	X	X	X		
Wake County SmartStart	970	1,008			X				
Washington County Schools	100	102		X		X	X		X
Watauga County Schools	106	112	X	X	X	X	X		X
The Partnership for Children of Wayne County, Inc.	630	635	X		X		X	X	X
Wilkes County Schools	512	530		X	X	X		X	X
Wilson County Partnership for Children	216	134	X		X				X
Yadkin County Schools	158	161			X			X	X
Region D Child Care, Inc. (Yancey County)	52	47	X						
TOTAL	27,582	25,445	22	50	59	37	39	35	55

SECTION 7.24.(c) The Department of Public Instruction shall submit a report by February 1, 2008, to the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, and the Fiscal Research Division. This final report shall include the following:

- (1) The number of children participating in the program.
- (2) The number of children participating in the program who have never been served in other early education programs, such as child care, public or private preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, or early intervention programs.
- (3) The expected expenditures for the programs and the source of the local match for each grantee.
- (4) The location of program sites and the corresponding number of children participating in the program at each site.
- (5) A comprehensive cost analysis of the program, including the cost per child served by the program.
- (6) The status of the NC Prekindergarten initiatives as outlined in this section.

Note: The numbers in this report are reflective of the More at Four Program as of December, 16, 2007. Due to ongoing expansion activities, numbers will change dramatically before the February 1, 2008 due date. Therefore, an updated version will be submitted to the board in mid-January.