



**More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program
Progress Report to the North Carolina General Assembly**

February 1, 2006

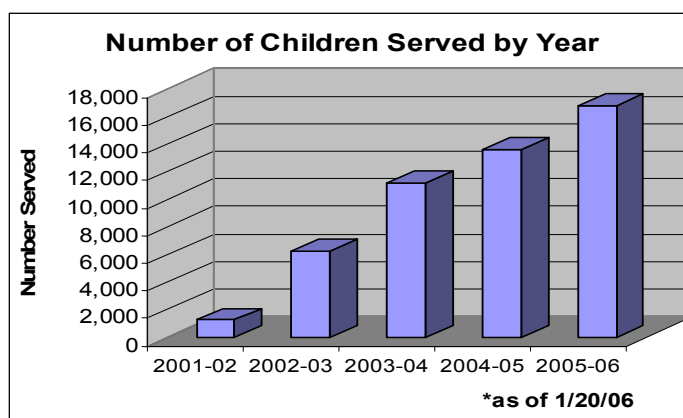
Submitted by

- Office of School Readiness/More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Public Instruction
- More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program Task Force

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 lagging behind their peers.

More at Four has served 16,775 children in SFY 2005-06, as of January 20, 2006. 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 2005-06, as of 1/20/06, 73 percent were unserved when enrolled and 60 percent had never been served in any preschool or child care setting.

Local programs use a variety of strategies to find and recruit eligible children. The most common and effective strategies are word of mouth among parents, flyers and brochures, coordination with public schools, and coordination with social services and health agencies.

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

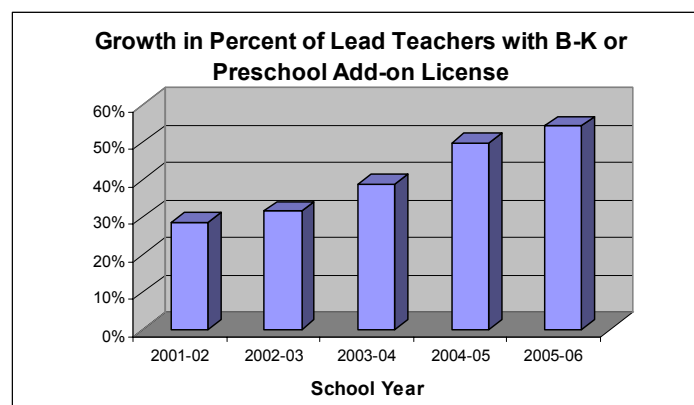
According to the 2004-05 More at Four evaluation by FPG Child Development Institute, "children who participated in the More at Four Program exhibited continued growth in key skill areas from the beginning of their pre-k year through the end of kindergarten, often performing at or close to the expected average for their age by the end of kindergarten. Given that these children were selected for More at Four based on their risk status and, as expected, were performing below average for their age at entry into the program, these gains are notable." The evaluation also shows that the program is especially beneficial for those children most at-risk of school failure. (Peisner-Feinberg and Maris, 2005)

A commitment to high-quality

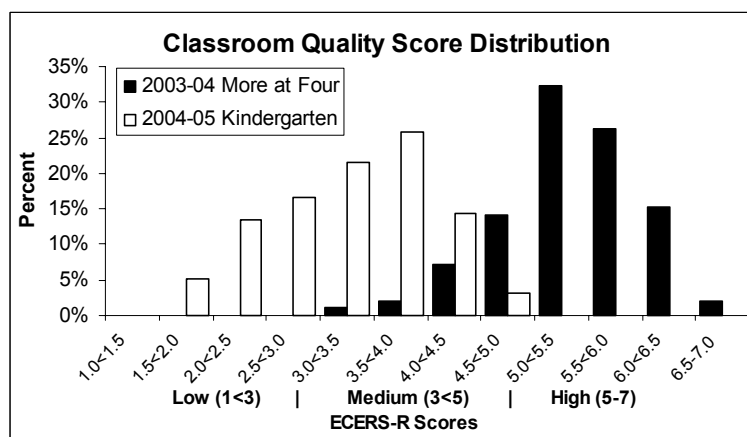
More at Four is recognized as one of the four highest-quality state pre-kindergarten programs nationally by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), by meeting nine of ten pre-k quality benchmarks (and should meet the tenth benchmark in future NIEER reports.)

More at Four's high-quality program standards include licensed teachers with specialized training and ongoing professional development, small class size, low staff-to-child ratio, research-based and comprehensive curricula and a focus on the whole child and family.

Over 54 percent of More at Four teachers now hold a Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) license, Preschool Add-on license or provisional B-K license (public schools only), as standards require, and 84 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.



Furthermore, classroom quality continues to be high overall for More at Four classrooms. In the evaluation sample of classrooms, the average rating on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R) is in the high-quality range. Pre-k classroom quality, in fact, was much higher than the quality of the kindergarten classes these children attended the following year.

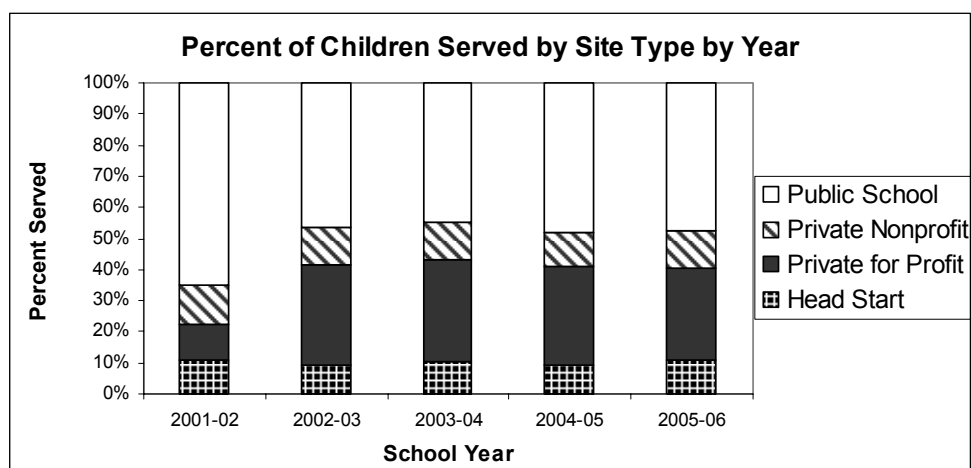


The More at Four state office continues to provide extensive, ongoing professional development and technical assistance for local programs to promote ongoing quality improvement.

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 North Carolina Office of School Readiness

To further improve state-level collaboration efforts, in July 2005 the NC Department of Public Instruction, the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of the Governor entered into an agreement to combine their separate preschool/pre-kindergarten programs, creating the North Carolina Office of School Readiness. This office includes More at Four, a Title I preschool consultant, an Even Start consultant and two Exceptional Children preschool consultants.

More at Four financial information

Over 92 percent of state appropriations for More at Four support classroom operations. The average state operating cost per slot is \$3,850 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 2005-06, as of December 20, 2005¹

Budget Category	Budgeted Amount	% of Total
Classroom Start-Up (one-time allocation)	2,158,215	3.2%
Classroom Operations	59,492,120	89.2%
Subtotal - Classroom Funds	61,650,335	92.5%
T.E.A.C.H.® Scholarships	1,195,949	1.8%
Professional Development	525,917	0.8%
External Evaluation and Database	888,107	1.3%
Administrative Costs	2,420,962	3.6%
Transferred to Subsidy ²	--	--
Total Budget	\$ 66,681,270	100%

Table II. Estimated Other Resources Supporting More at Four at the Local Level Projected for SFY 2005-06, as reported as of December 20, 2005³

Type of Funds	Projected Amount	% of Total
Smart Start ⁴	12,333,221	36.9%
Pre-School Disabilities	1,294,028	3.9%
Subsidy	1,665,430	5.0%
Head Start	4,393,421	13.1%
Title I	4,097,405	12.3%
City/County Appropriations	6,441,247	19.3%
Other	3,185,346	9.5%
Total	\$ 33,410,098	100%

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

² Legislation requires that any funds for slots unfilled by 12/30/05 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 2005-06 represent the budgeted amounts as reported by More at Four contractors. Smart Start budgeted contributions may also be reported under subsidy.

A smart investment for progress in education

With over four years of investment in a state-funded pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds, the program is proving successful. Yet, challenges remain for the program's future. State funding provides only approximately half of the full cost of a high-quality pre-kindergarten program. Local communities are facing increasing funding challenges as the program expands and as local resources available to support the full costs of the program are dwindling or needed for other purposes. As more teachers achieve the Birth-Kindergarten (B-K) licensure, it is increasingly critical to adequately fund teacher salaries and benefits to keep these teachers in More at Four classrooms. Local communities are also challenged by the need for more classroom space for pre-kindergarten and the need for transportation.

Despite these challenges, More at Four has grown over four years to serve more children every year and is effectively reaching its target at-risk population. By providing a nationally recognized high-quality pre-kindergarten 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.

More at Four's commitment to high-quality pre-kindergarten also benefits children beyond those who are funded by More at Four. With 1,292 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 ongoing quality improvement. Sixty-four percent of classrooms with More at Four funded slots (required to meet More at Four's high standards) also serve children funded by other sources or parent fees.

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. Program standards are complementary to and facilitate the *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers*. Through a collaboration among More at Four, Smart Start, the Division of Child Development, the Department of Public Instruction, Early Intervention, Head Start State Collaboration Office, FPG Child Development Institute and Child Care Services Association, the standards are being developed and endorsed. More at Four and the Division of Child Development will implement a process to provide special state recognition to classrooms serving four-year-olds that meet the state standards.



2004 -05 More at Four Evaluation Highlights

"Children who participated in the More at Four Program exhibited continued growth in key skill areas from the beginning of their pre-kindergarten year through the end of kindergarten, often performing at or close to the expected average for their age by the end of kindergarten. Given that these children were selected for More at Four based on their risk status and, as expected, were performing below average for their age at entry into the program, these gains are notable.... Although the quality of the pre-k classrooms was significantly higher than the kindergarten classrooms, most children exhibited continued growth despite these discontinuities, suggesting that the high quality experiences provided in More at Four helped prepare them for school and enabled them to adapt to the school setting" (Peisner-Feinberg & Maris, 2005).

Child Outcomes

- Children who participated in the More at Four Pre-K Program made substantial progress in language/literacy skills, math skills, social skills, and general knowledge from the beginning of pre-k through the end of kindergarten. These gains are especially notable on two standardized measures, receptive language and applied math skills, where children sustained a pattern of growth over time.
- More at Four children demonstrated gains on receptive language and applied math skills that took them from one-half or more standard deviations below the mean at the beginning of preschool to at or near the mean by the end of kindergarten.
- For standardized measures of behavioral skills (social skills and problem behaviors) based on teacher's ratings in pre-k and kindergarten, children showed a somewhat different pattern of growth. On social skills, children's pre-k and kindergarten teachers rated them close to the population mean at the beginning of each year and viewed them as making some gains each year. Although the gains exhibited in pre-k were not maintained at entry into kindergarten (with fall kindergarten scores back to the average score for their age), this may reflect differences in teachers' expectations across the two settings. For problem behaviors, children's scores remained close to the expected average for their age throughout pre-k and kindergarten, indicating that they were exhibiting a normal amount of negative behavior for their age.

Child Outcomes and Classroom Quality

- Classroom environmental quality. Environmental ratings continue to be high overall for More at Four classrooms in the evaluation sample, with an average ECERS-R rating of 5.3 out of 7, which is considered in the high quality range. ECERS-R measures the quality of classroom practices, including the activities and materials, the interactions among teachers and children, the physical environment and the daily organization of the program.

The kindergartens in which the 2003-04 MAF pre-k children were enrolled in 2004-05 scored considerably lower on environmental quality, with an average rating of 3.2 out of 7, which is in the medium quality range. (See the *Classroom Quality* chart on page 2.)

- Child outcomes for pre-k and kindergarten and quality. There were no differences in children's developmental progress on outcome measures over the pre-k and kindergarten years on the basis of the quality in the *pre-k* classrooms. This finding is not surprising given the overall high quality of practices in the pre-k classes. However, children in higher quality *kindergarten* classrooms showed greater growth over the kindergarten year on one outcome measure, receptive language skills; there were no differences on the basis of classroom quality for the remaining measures.

Child Outcomes and Risk Level

While More at Four is a program focused on at-risk children and all enrolled children appear to benefit, it appears to be especially beneficial in several areas for those children *most* at-risk of school failure.

- More at Four children who were at *greater risk* (especially in terms of lower levels of English proficiency) demonstrated larger gains on receptive language, applied math problems, and pre-literacy concepts than did students at lower risk. These children began More at Four with less developed skills but made greater gains through the end of kindergarten, although they still scored lower at the end of the kindergarten year.
- For receptive language, both children with lower levels of English proficiency and with higher overall risk factor scores gained more over this two-year period.
- Children with higher total risk factor scores showed slightly greater increases in problem behaviors, especially after they entered kindergarten. While there was not an overall pattern of growth in problem behaviors across all children, there was a significant difference in the pattern of change for lower and higher risk children, perhaps suggesting that children at higher risk were having greater difficulty adapting to the behavioral demands of kindergarten classrooms. A possible relationship between the lower developmental quality of kindergartens and challenges for the most at-risk students bears further study.

Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Elander, K.C. & Maris, C.L. (2005). Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program: Year 4 (July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005) Program Characteristics and Services. Chapel Hill, NC: FPG Child Development Institute.

Peisner-Feinberg, E.S. & Maris, C.L. (2005). Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program: Children's Longitudinal Outcomes and Classroom Quality in Kindergarten. Chapel Hill, NC: FPG Child Development Institute.

For more information about the Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program, visit the website at www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval

Other Resources Accessed by Contractor

More at Four Program, FY 2005-06 (as of 1/20/06)			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	165	171		X	X	X		X	X
Alexander County Partnership for Children	40	42	X		X	X		X	X
Alleghany County Schools	67	69		X	X	X			X
Anson County Partnership for Children	80	83		X	X			X	
Ashe County School System	76	83	X	X		X	X	X	X
Avery County Public Schools	83	86	X	X		X			X
Beaufort/Hyde Partnership for Children	114	114			X		X		X
Bertie County Schools	53	56		X			X		X
Bladen County Schools	73	78		X		X	X		X
Brunswick County Partnership for Children	108	126	X	X	X				X
Buncombe County Partnership for Children	186	191	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Burke County Partnership for Children	353	374	X		X	X		X	X
Cabarrus County Partnership for Children	263	285	X	X	X			X	X
Caldwell County Smart Start	72	78		X	X			X	X
Northeastern Community Development Corp. (Camden)	33	35	X		X				X
Carteret County Schools	123	133	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Caswell County Schools	63	76		X		X	X		X
Catawba County Partnership for Children	186	198		X	X	X	X		X
Chatham County Partnership for Children	54	55	X	X	X				X
Edenton-Chowan Board of Education	24	24					X		
Cleveland County Partnership for Children	131	145			X				
Columbus County Schools	149	162				X	X		
Craven County Board of Education	93	99			X		X		X
Cumberland County Partnership for Children	736	827	X		X		X	X	X
Currituck County Schools	18	18					X		
Dare County Schools	18	18		X			X		
Davidson County Partnership for Children	270	288		X	X	X	X		X
Davie County Schools	105	113	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Duplin County Schools	100	104		X	X	X	X	X	X
Durham Partnership for Children	321	356	X	X	X		X	X	X
Smart Start of Forsyth County	413	472		X	X			X	
Franklin/Granville/Vance Partnership	18	23			X				
Gaston County Schools	344	373	X	X	X		X		X
Gates County Board of Education	29	30	X		X	X	X		X
Granville County Schools	60	61			X		X		X
Guilford County Partnership for Children, Inc.	949	1,047	X	X	X			X	X
Halifax Warren SmartStart Partnership for Children	149	155		X	X	X	X	X	X

More at Four Program, FY 2005-06 (as of 1/20/06)			Sources of Other Resources						
Contractor	# of Slots	# of Children Served	Subsidy	Title I	Smart Start	Preschool Disabilities	Local Appropri	Head Start	Other
Harnett County Partnership for Children	178	193			X				
Henderson County Partnership for Children	113	123	X		X			X	X
Hertford County Public Schools	99	108		X		X		X	X
Hoke County Schools	113	117		X	X		X		X
Hyde County Schools	15	15				X	X		X
Iredell County Partnership for Young Children	231	266	X		X				X
Partnership for Children of Johnston County	294	322			X				X
Jones County Partnership for Children	52	57		X	X	X			X
Lee County Partnership for Children	130	152			X		X		X
Lenoir-Greene Partnership for Children	193	206			X				
Partnership for Children of Lincoln & Gaston Co.	144	154	X		X	X	X		X
Community Action Opportunities (Madison County)	18	19					X	X	
Martin County Schools	38	38		X		X	X		
McDowell County Schools	94	113		X		X		X	X
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	1363	1,503	X		X		X		X
Intermountain Children (Mitchell County)	35	38					X		X
Montgomery County Partnership for Children	175	179	X		X		X		X
Moore County Schools	30	32			X				
Down East Partnership for Children (Nash/Edgecombe)	197	207	X	X	X	X			X
New Hanover County Schools	306	324			X		X	X	X
Northampton County Schools	56	57		X		X		X	X
Onslow County Schools	52	56		X		X		X	
Orange County Partnership for Young Children	124	130	X		X			X	X
Pamlico County Schools	34	37				X	X		X
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	66	68		X					
Pender County Schools	100	107		X	X		X	X	X
Perquimans County Schools	36	36		X		X	X		X
Person County Partnership for Children	67	67		X	X	X		X	
Pitt County Public Schools	228	242		X	X	X			X
Polk County Schools	76	78		X			X	X	
Randolph County Partnership for Children	196	204		X	X		X		
Region A Partnership for Children (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain Counties)	295	314	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Richmond County Schools	168	186			X	X	X		X
Public Schools of Robeson County	481	515	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rockingham County Partnership for Children, Inc.	184	204			X		X		X
Rowan Partnership for Children	144	161			X		X		X
Rutherford County Schools	193	209		X				X	X

More at Four Program, FY 2005-06 (as of 1/20/06)			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	180	206			X		X		X
Scotland County Schools	90	99					X		X
Stanly County School System	175	185		X		X	X		X
Stokes Partnership for Children, Inc.	132	144		X	X	X	X	X	X
Surry County Early Childhood Partnership, Inc.	178	206	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transylvania County Schools	30	30		X			X		X
Tyrrell County Schools	18	18		X	X		X		X
Union County Public Schools	219	229	X		X		X		X
Vance County Schools	38	39		X	X		X		
Wake County SmartStart	746	818			X				
Washington County Schools	69	71		X	X		X		X
Watauga County Schools	76	84		X	X		X		
The Partnership for Children of Wayne County, Inc.	486	540	X		X	X	X	X	X
Wilkes County Schools	366	388		X	X	X	X	X	X
Wilson County Partnership for Children	90	101			X				X
Yadkin County Schools	102	110			X		X	X	X
Region D Child Care, Inc. (Yancey County)	21	22	X				X		X
TOTAL	15,453	16,775							