

Current state of North Carolina's pre-kindergarten program

- To qualify, children must be 4 years old by August 31 of the year they enter and must come from a family whose gross income is equal to or less than 75% of the state median income. Other non-income based factors to qualify are limited English proficiency, chronic health condition, developmental/educational need, and military family status.
- Since the program became statewide in 2003-04, NC Pre-K has served more than 350,000 children.
- The state funds approximately 29,000 NC Pre-K spots annually; around 7,000 children remain on the waiting list each year. Many more are probably eligible for one or more reasons but aren't waitlisted because their families didn't apply for the program.
- At its height, state spending per child was \$7,679 in 2002.
- Cost of the program varies by setting; in 2016, Head Start received about \$3,964 per child from the state, Public school sites received \$4,777 per child and private child care sites received \$6,257 per child.
- Monthly reimbursement rates by the NC Pre-K Program vary by the type of classroom and teacher qualifications, ranging from up to \$400 per child (in Head Start sites) to a maximum of \$650 (private sites with a B-K-licensed lead teacher), with an approximate average annual cost per child of \$5,000.
- North Carolina's pre-K program is one of only five in the nation to meet the benchmarks for a quality, cost-effective program. According to an annual assessment, NC Pre-K students made significant gains from pre-K through kindergarten in language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge, and behavior.
- [A 2016 UNC study showed](#) about two-thirds (66%) of Pre-K teachers held a Bachelor's degree and the remaining one-third (34%) held a Master's degree.
- A 2017 study by NC DHHS found the overall cost for a slot in the NC Pre-K program is \$9,126, with State funding covering 61% of the cost, or approximately \$5,534.
- In March 2017, Gov. Roy Cooper proposed a two-year budget that includes funding for 4,700 additional pre-K spots. His goal is to go from 22% participation to 55% by 2025.
- **House Bill 90**, passed in February, 2018, included a plan to eliminate the Pre-K waiting list by adding funding for approximately 3,000 additional Pre-K seats over the next two years. This funding will expand NC Pre-K funding by about \$26 million in FY 2019-20, growing to \$36 million in FY 20-21. This replaces the nearly 6,000 slots cut since 2011.

Pre-K is a crucial stage to a child's development

- Children who attend preschool gain confidence by learning the expectations and routines of school through close communication with other children.
- Pre-K is a place where children learn to socialize, make decisions, interact with others, and negotiate—all of which are important to child development.

Children who attend Pre-K programs are more self-sufficient in the future

- Children who went to preschool were consistently employed, more likely to have full time jobs, less likely to rely on public assistance, resulting in overall positive future outcomes.
- Children who attend preschool are more likely to have a savings account, and own a house and a car.

Attending Pre-K decreases both achievement and skill gaps

- 123 studies across four decades of early education research found that by third grade, one-third of the achievement gap can be closed by early education.
- Children who attended pre-K usually have a higher grade point average and are more likely to graduate high school and college.
- Fundamental skills like eye contact, self-confidence, work efficiency, attention span, and control of temper are developed during the earliest stages of childhood are enriched in Pre-K
- Latino children and other dual language learners greatly benefitted from NC Pre-K, making gains in the program at a greater rate than other students.

Pre-K decreases delinquency

- Children who attended pre-school are less likely to develop alcohol or drug problems, commit a felony, and go to prison. They are half as likely to be arrested.

Early education saves the State money in the future

- Every \$1 invested in preschool saves taxpayers up to \$13 in future costs in incarceration, education, tax collections increases, and welfare.
- Pre-K offers a better return on investment than the stock market. The annual rate of return for preschool spending is between 7-10%; stocks have an average return of 5.8% per year.
- Investment in pre-K pays off by reducing the number of children placed into special education classrooms in the third grade by 39%; special education costs nearly twice as much as regular classroom education.

The most effective preschool education programs share common features

- A well-implemented, evidence-based curriculum.
- Coaching and continuous training of Pre-K teachers.
- High rates of child engagement.
- Positive classroom environment.
- Teachers who engage children in more complex language interactions.

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