



NC Pre-Kindergarten

March 2017

Goal: State-funded pre-kindergarten was established in 2001 to support the academic needs of four-year-old children considered to be at risk of school failure.

History: **After an initial “incubation period” in the Office of the Governor, the NC General Assembly**, in 2006, administratively placed the state pre-kindergarten office and program in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and under the authority of the State Board of Education.

This move established a more coherent and coordinated system of educational pre-kindergarten in the state by joining and leveraging state-funded pre-kindergarten with all federally-funded pre-kindergarten programs housed in the Department of Public Instruction.

In 2010, the Office of Early Learning was established to continue pre-kindergarten implementation as well as focus on the Pre-k to Grade 3 learning continuum and the alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment across the early grades.

The long-term impact of state-funded pre-kindergarten was established in 2010, 2011 and recently reaffirmed in 2016 by two independent research institutions.

- In 2010, an evaluation by UNC-Chapel Hill found a significant impact of pre-kindergarten on student achievement at 3rd grade and a narrowing of the achievement gap.
- In 2011, Duke University found a significant impact of pre-kindergarten on student achievement at 3rd grade and reduction in special education placement.
- In 2016, Duke University found state-funded prekindergarten to be associated with higher reading and math scores in the tested grades as well as a lower likelihood of special education placement for children in grades 3, 4, and 5 (29%, 43%, and 48%, respectively).

These results follow ten years of research by UNC-Chapel Hill documenting state-funded pre-kindergarten to be highly rigorous and significantly impactful to the learning growth for all students enrolled, particularly for those identified to be at greatest risk for school failure.

In 2011, the program was transferred from DPI and State Board of Education oversight.

Status: State-funded pre-kindergarten is currently administered by the Division of Child Development and Early Education which is charged with the primary role of regulatory oversight of child care in the state.

Current Legislation: Session Law 2016-94

SECTION 12B.5.(a) The Department of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction and any other agencies or organizations that administer, support, or study early education in this State, and within resources currently available, shall collaborate on an ongoing basis to develop and implement a statewide vision for early childhood education.

Recommendation(s):

1. Define a forward thinking Birth-Grade 3 (B-3) governance structure to include the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction in the oversight and management of state-funded pre-kindergarten.

Issue(s):

1. **Pre-kindergarten is central to the State Board of Education’s** obligation to provide each NC Child with a sound and basic education.

Main Points:

1. Current governance structure excludes State Board in the execution of state-prekindergarten, **limiting the State’s ability to build a rigorous and responsive B-3** education continuum.