



Alabama School Readiness Alliance
PRE-K TASK FORCE



2020

Recommendations for the
EXPANSION OF
First Class Pre-K
in Alabama



Alabama School
Readiness Alliance



Welcome to the

Pre-K Task Force Recommendations for the Expansion of First Class Pre-K in Alabama

Developed in 2012. Revised for the 2020 Legislative Session

In 2011, the Alabama School Readiness Alliance formed a statewide Pre-K Task Force to grow connections among pre-k champions and identify strategies to increase state investments in high-quality, voluntary pre-k. Members of the task force came together to study pre-k research, best practices and cost estimates.

The Pre-K Task Force's recommendations outline a vision for expanding Alabama's high-quality, voluntary First Class Pre-K program so that all families have the opportunity to enroll their four-year-olds. To accomplish this goal, the Pre-K Task Force has recommended increasing the level of state investment in First Class Pre-K to \$200 million over a ten-year period, beginning in 2013-2014 and culminating in 2022-2023.

About the Alabama School Readiness Alliance

The Alabama School Readiness Alliance is a statewide, nonprofit coalition advocating for the expansion of high-quality, voluntary pre-k. ASRA was formed in 2006 as a joint campaign of A+ Education Partnership, Alabama Giving, Alabama Partnership for Children and VOICES for Alabama's Children.





For **13 years** in a row, Alabama's First Class Pre-K has been ranked #1 in the country for quality.



But only **37%** of four-year-olds in Alabama have access to the program.

2020 RECOMMENDATION

Increase First Class Pre-K Investments by \$25 Million

We support Governor Ivey's proposal to increase state investments in First Class Pre-K by \$25 million during the 2020 Legislative Session. This increase will help keep our state on track to fully fund the program by the 2022-2023 school year.

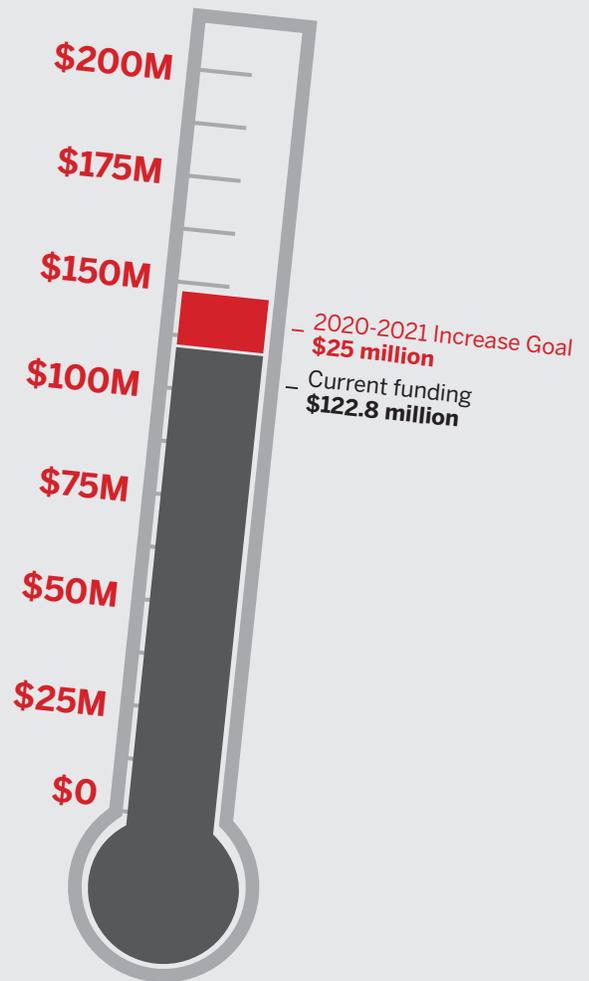
A **\$25 million** increase would...



add at least **160** new classrooms



help enroll at least **2,880** additional four-year-olds



Alabama School Readiness Alliance Pre-K Task Force

Connecting pre-k champions in Alabama

Co-Chairs

Mike Luce
Vice Chairman, Harbert
Management

Bob Powers
President, The Eufaula Agency

Members

Carolyn Akers,
Executive Director, Mobile Area
Education Foundation

Dee Ard,
Retired Head Start, Pre-K and
Home Visiting Leader

Jeremy L. Arthur,
President & CEO, Chamber of
Commerce Association of Alabama

Florence Bellamy,
Past President, Alabama
Association of School Boards

Tommy Bice,
Education Director, Mike & Gillian
Goodrich Foundation

Jeanie Box,
Orlean Bullard Beeson School of
Education, Samford University

Melanie Bridgeforth,
President & CEO, The Women's
Fund of Greater Birmingham

Jacqueline Brooks,
Superintendent, Macon County
Schools

Jeanna Bulman,
Pharmacist and Parent, Orange
Beach

Molly Cagle,
Vice President of Governmental
Affairs, Business Council of
Alabama

Leslie Carlisle,
Carlisle & Associates: Philanthropy
Consulting, LLC (Rotary Club of
Birmingham Representative)

Jeff Coleman,
President and CEO, Coleman World
Group

Jerry Courtney,
President and CEO, Heart of the
Valley YMCA (Huntsville)

Nikki Thomas Davis,
Executive Director, Alabama Civil
Justice Foundation

Thaylee Dickerson,
Pastor, United Christian Church
(Prattville)

Mark Dixon,
President, A+ Education
Partnership

David Donaldson,
Vice President, Governmental &
Community Relations, Vulcan
Materials Company

Matthew Durdin,
Director of External Affairs,
Alabama Farmers Federation

Walter Gonsoulin,
Superintendent, Jefferson County
Schools

Gillian Goodrich,
Trustee, Mike and Gillian Goodrich
Charitable Foundation

James Harrison, Jr.,
Chairman and CEO, Harco Drug,
Retired

Liz Huntley,
Associate, Lightfoot Franklin &
White, LLC

Kay Jennings,
Executive Director, TCR Child Care
Corporation

Johnny Johns,
President and CEO, Protective Life

Shelley Jones,
Community Volunteer and Retired
Elementary School Principal

Maria Kennedy,
Executive Director, Daniel
Foundation of Alabama

Paul Kennedy,
President, Walker Area Community
Foundation

Drew Langloh,
President, United Way of Central
Alabama

Barbara Larson,
Development Associate, Public
Affairs Research Council of
Alabama

Linda Lee,
Executive Director, Alabama
Chapter – American Academy of
Pediatrics

Jay Love,
Former State Representative;
Finance Chairman, Business
Education Alliance

Harriet Renorda McFarlin,
Past President, Alabama Head Start
Association; Region IV Head Start
Association Board of Directors

Frank "Trippy" McGuire,
Retired District Judge, Covington
County

Sue McInnish,
Retired Executive Director, Alabama
Civil Justice Foundation

Maurice Mercer,
Entrepreneur and Pelham City
Councilman

Joseph B. Morton,
Chairman and President,
Business Education Alliance

Caroline Novak,
Retired Founding President, A+
Education Partnership

Jim Page,
President and CEO, Chamber of
Commerce of West Alabama

Major General Butch Pair,
US Army, Retired

Barbara Patton,
Retired Opelika Chamber President
and former Mayor of Opelika

Martha Peek,
Former Superintendent (Retired),
Mobile Public Schools

Gail Piggott,
Executive Director, Alabama
Partnership for Children

Robbie Roberts,
Executive Director, Harris Early
Learning Center

Dionne Rosser-Mims,
Dean, Troy University College of
Education

Kristina Scott,
Executive Director, Alabama
Possible

Jimmy Shaw,
Superintendent, Florence City
Schools

Ann Sikes,
Executive Director, Montgomery
Education Foundation

Sally Smith,
Executive Director, Alabama
Association of School Boards

Zeke Smith,
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Power Company

Christie Steigerwald,
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Foley

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Relations Director, PNC Bank

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Alabama Association of School
Boards

Leila Watson,
Attorney, Cory Watson Attorneys

James C. Wiley, MD,
Founder of FOCUS Pediatric Clinic,
Mobile

Vic Wilson,
Executive Director, Council for
Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)

Stephen Woerner,
Executive Director, VOICES for
Alabama's Children

Joan Wright,
Executive Director, Childcare
Resources

2020 Pre-K Task Force Recommendations



We recommend expanding Alabama’s high-quality, voluntary First Class Pre-K program so that all families have the opportunity to enroll their four-year-olds. To accomplish this goal, we recommend increasing the total level of state investments for First Class Pre-K to approximately \$200 million by the 2022- 2023 school year.

2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY:
Increase First Class Pre-K Investments by \$25 Million

We support Governor Ivey’s proposal to increase state investments in First Class Pre-K by \$25 million during the 2020 Legislative Session. This increase will bring the total level of funding for First Class Pre-K to \$147.8 million, and keep our state on track to fully fund the program by the 2022-2023 school year.



We recommend that additional state investments in First Class Pre-K:

- ✓ prioritize expanding access to students at-risk of school failure;
- ✓ encourage and leverage the use of local and private matching funds;
- ✓ are sustainable and based on the true costs of a high-quality program; and
- ✓ are guided by a statewide needs assessment reviewing supply (available providers, facilities, workforce) and demand (survey of Alabama parents to identify estimated participation rate) for pre-k expansion. We also encourage strategies to grow demand so that families whose children would benefit from pre-k but who don’t realize its importance become potential pre-k consumers.



We support the continued use of a “diverse delivery” funding structure for First Class Pre-K that creates high-quality, state-funded pre-k classrooms in public schools, Head Start and community-based settings (such as child care, nonprofit and

faith-based centers). We recommend revised strategies and policies that strategically target areas in the state with lower rates of First Class Pre-K access, and result in more First Class Pre-K programs being placed in community-based settings.



We recommend that the Department of Early Childhood Education continue to improve coordination with other state departments in order to ensure that resources are used efficiently and that First Class Pre-K is aligned with child care improvement efforts; other early childhood and family programs; and K-12 learning standards, data systems, accountability and assessment.



We recommend that the Department of Early Childhood Education maintain the ten quality benchmarks for First Class Pre-K measured annually by the National Institute for Early Education Research. All First Class providers must adhere to the program’s quality standards and coordinate with families and schools to facilitate children’s smooth transition into kindergarten.



We recognize that parents are their children’s first and most important teachers. With that in mind, we recommend that First Class Pre-K continue to incorporate evidence-based best practices for meaningfully engaging and strengthening families.



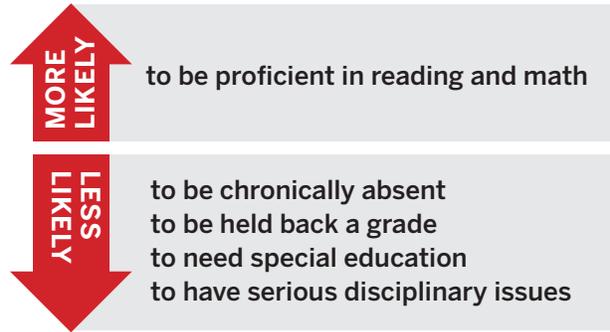
We recommend that the Department of Early Childhood Education continue efforts to enhance and measure the quality of First Class Pre-K. The quality of teaching should be regularly observed and student outcomes should be tracked over time through a high- quality, longitudinal program evaluation. This should include a plan to continue progress toward a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment in all systems.



While the state expands access to First Class Pre-K, we support local governments, private companies, charitable organizations, and other state partners in their work to address school readiness gaps by investing in high-quality pre-k and other evidence-based programs that improve the outcomes of children pre-birth to age five, and their families.

Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program has lasting results¹

The Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham have followed student progress **through the eighth grade**, and found that Alabama First Class Pre-K students, regardless of demographics, zip code or school, are:

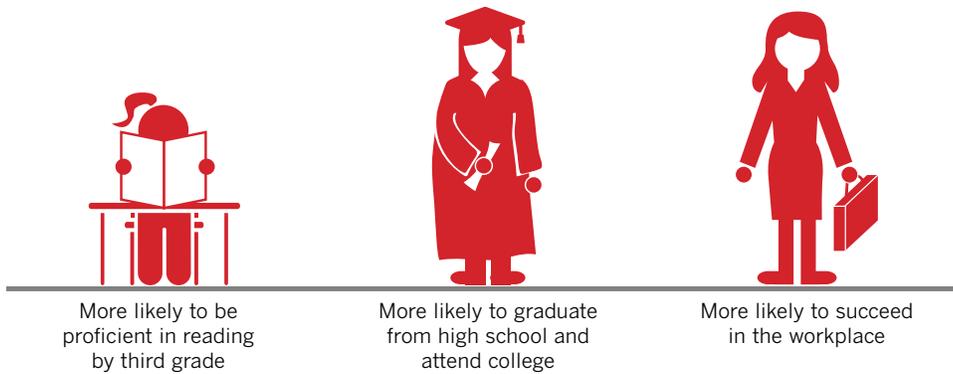


High-Quality Pre-K Works

An abundance of research has shown that the academic “achievement gap” begins as a school readiness gap.² Moreover, brain science tells us that the first five years of a child’s life establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for everything that follows—and getting things right the first time is easier and less expensive than trying to fix them when a child is older.³

High-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten (pre-k) for four-year-olds is an effective early childhood education program that prepares children to succeed socially, emotionally and academically in kindergarten and beyond.

Graduates of a high-quality pre-k program are:⁴



1 Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, 2019, www.children.alabama.gov.

2 Burkam, D., & Lee, V. (2002). *Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school*. Economic Policy Institute, Washington, DC.

3 Shonkoff, J.P., & Phillips, D.A. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

4 Committee for Economic Development (2006). *The economic promise of investing in high-quality preschool: Using early education to improve economic growth and the fiscal sustainability of states and the nation*. Washington, D.C.



Alabama School Readiness Alliance PRE-K TASK FORCE

Some of the companies and organizations represented on the Alabama School Readiness Alliance's statewide Pre-K Task Force:



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