

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2001**

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SENATE BILL 215

Short Title: Prekindergarten Prog. for At-Risk Children. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Rucho; Ballance, Ballantine, Bingham, Clodfelter, Forrester, Foyx, Garwood, Horton, Hoyle, Kinnaird, Moore, Shaw of Guilford, and Weinstein.

Referred to: Education/Higher Education.

February 22, 2001

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM TO ENSURE
2 THAT ALL CHILDREN HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN
3 KINDERGARTEN.
4

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** Establishment of the Planning Task Force for the Development
7 of a Prekindergarten Program. - The Department of Public Instruction, under the
8 direction of the State Board of Education, shall establish the Planning Task Force for
9 the Development of a Prekindergarten Program.

10 **SECTION 2.** Purpose. - The purpose of the Task Force shall be to develop a
11 prekindergarten program for four-year-old children in North Carolina to ensure that all
12 children have an opportunity to succeed in kindergarten.

13 **SECTION 3.** Membership. - The Task Force membership shall include:

- 14 (1) Specialists in early childhood development, including staff from the
15 Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center in Chapel Hill;
16 (2) Classroom teachers who are certified in early childhood education;
17 (3) Representatives of the private day care providers in North Carolina;
18 (4) Employees of the Department of Health and Human Services who are
19 knowledgeable in the areas of early childhood development, current
20 State and federally funded efforts in child development, and providing
21 child care;
22 (5) Representatives of Smart Start Partnerships;
23 (6) Representatives of local school administrative units;
24 (7) Representatives of Head Start prekindergarten programs in North
25 Carolina; and

- 1 (8) A Chair appointed by the State Board upon the recommendation of the
2 Governor.

3 **SECTION 4.** Components of the Program. - The Task Force shall develop a
4 prekindergarten program to serve four-year-old children in North Carolina who are
5 potentially at risk of not being ready for kindergarten. The goal of the program shall be
6 to make these children ready for kindergarten. The program shall be consistent with
7 standards and assessments established by the State Board of Education and shall
8 include:

- 9 (1) A curriculum or several curricula that are developed or selected by the
10 Task Force. These curricula shall (i) focus primarily on oral language
11 and emergent literacy, (ii) engage children through key experiences
12 and provide background knowledge requisite for formal learning and
13 successful reading in the early elementary years, (iii) involve active
14 learning, (iv) promote measurable kindergarten language-readiness
15 skills that focus on emergency literacy and mathematical skills, and (v)
16 develop skills that will prepare children emotionally and socially for
17 kindergarten.
- 18 (2) An emphasis on parental and family involvement with the
19 prekindergarten program, ongoing assessment of each child by
20 teachers, and regular discussions with parents.
- 21 (3) A methodology and structure for identifying children who demonstrate
22 educational needs on the basis of an assessment, and who are eligible
23 to enter kindergarten the next school year.
- 24 (4) Standards and guidelines for a program to provide grants to local
25 school boards, private child care providers, and other entities willing to
26 establish prekindergarten programs to serve these children.
- 27 (5) Matching requirements for all State grants that are based on a county's
28 ability to pay.
- 29 (6) A quality-control system that is developed in cooperation with the
30 Department of Health and Human Services. Under this system, the
31 Department's child care rating system may be used to determine
32 program eligibility.
- 33 (7) Standards for minimum teacher qualifications. Each classroom site that
34 is initially funded must have at least one teacher who is certified or
35 provisionally certified in birth to kindergarten education.
- 36 (8) An evaluation system for programs that are established. The evaluation
37 system shall include, at a minimum, participants' readiness for
38 kindergarten, percentage of participants scoring at or above grade level
39 on the third grade end-of-grade test, and high school graduation rates.
- 40 (9) A proposal for ongoing program evaluation that includes evaluation by
41 expert methodologists outside the Departments of Public Instruction
42 and Health and Human Services.
- 43 (10) Recommendations on organizational placement and administration of
44 the program.

1 **SECTION 5.** Recommendations by the Task Force. - The Task Force shall
2 make its recommendations to the State Board of Education by March 1, 2002.
3 Recommendations shall include:

- 4 (1) Plans for providing grants for the operation of some limited number of
5 grant-funded prekindergarten programs for the 2002-2003 school year.
6 (2) Possible reallocations of funds from existing programs providing
7 prekindergarten related care and services, including child care
8 subsidies, in order to direct and coordinate funding for prekindergarten
9 programs for four-year-olds with demonstrated educational needs. All
10 potential funding sources, including federal as well as State-funded
11 efforts, should be identified.

12 **SECTION 6.** Recommendations by the State Board of Education. - The
13 State Board of Education shall recommend legislation to the Regular 2002 Session of
14 the 2001 General Assembly to establish a program that is based on, but not limited by,
15 the Task Force's recommendations. The State Board may accept preliminary
16 applications from potential grantees but shall not make any funding commitments until
17 after legislation is enacted by the General Assembly.

18 **SECTION 7.** Appropriation. - There is appropriated from the General Fund
19 to the State Board of Education the sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars
20 (\$250,000) for the 2001-2002 fiscal year to implement Sections 1 through 5 of this act.

21 **SECTION 8.** Effective Date. - This act becomes effective July 1, 2001.