



Alabama School Readiness Alliance
PRE-K TASK FORCE

2019

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 2019 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 short- and long-term strategies to increase investments in high-quality, voluntary pre-k in Alabama. 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 total level of state investments in First Class Pre-K by \$125 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 **12 years** in a row, Alabama's First Class Pre-K has been ranked #1 in the country for quality.



But only **32%** of four-year-olds in Alabama have access to the program.

2019 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 2019 Legislative Session. This increase will help keep our state on track to fully fund the program by the 2022-2023 school year.

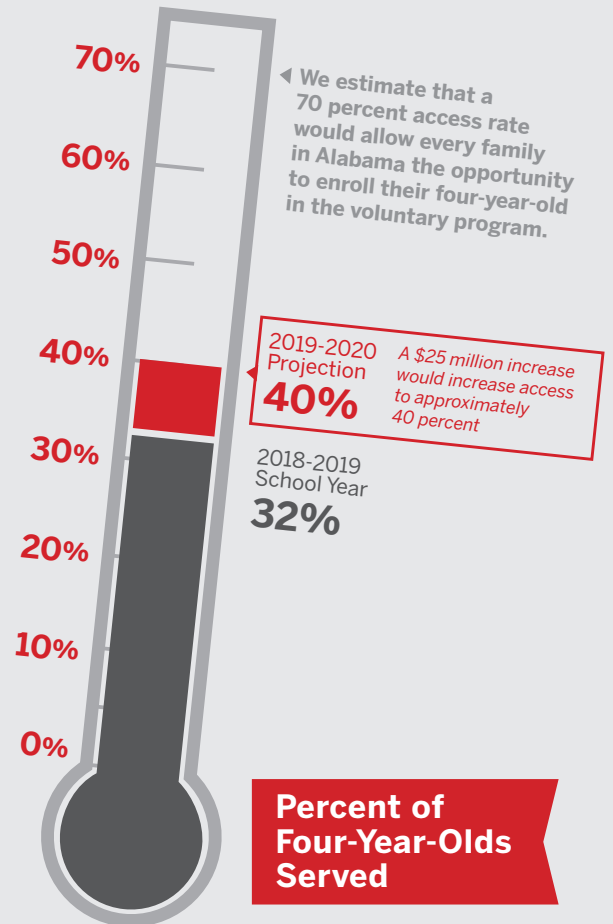
A **\$25 million** increase would...



add approximately
242
new classrooms



help enroll approximately
4,356
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

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Executive Director, Mobile Area
Education Foundation

Dee Ard
Early Care Team Leader, Head
Start/Early Head Start, Community
Action Partnership of North
Alabama

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Association of Alabama

Florence Bellamy
Past President, Alabama
Association of School Boards

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Education Director, Mike & Gillian
Goodrich Foundation

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Orlean Bullard Beeson School of
Education, Samford University

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Fund of Greater Birmingham

Jacqueline Brooks
Superintendent, Macon County
Schools

Jeanna Bulman
Pharmacist and Parent, Orange
Beach

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

Jeff Coleman
President and CEO, Coleman World
Group

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

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

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Programs-Senate, Alabama
Farmers Federation

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Partnership

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Alabama

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and Community Support, Jefferson
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Trustee, Mike and Gillian Goodrich
Charitable Foundation

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Co-Chair, Education Steering
Committee, BOLD GOALS
Coalition of Central Alabama

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
Executive Chairman, 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;
Chairman of Finance, Business
Education Alliance

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

Frank "Trippy" McGuire
District Judge, Covington County

Sue McInnish
Retired Executive Director, Alabama
Civil Justice Foundation

Maurice Mercer
Entrepreneur and Pelham City
Councilman

Joseph B. Morton
Executive Director, 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

Martha Peek
Former Superintendent (Retired),
Mobile Public Schools

Barbara Patton
Retired Opelika Chamber President
and former Mayor of Opelika

Gail Piggott
Executive Director, Alabama
Partnership for Children

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Policy, A+ Education Partnership

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Learning Center

Kristina Scott
Executive Director, Alabama
Possible

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Education Foundation

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Superintendent, Florence City
Schools

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Association of School Boards

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Foley

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Mobile

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Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS)

Stephen Woerner
Executive Director, VOICES for
Alabama's Children

Joan Wright
Executive Director, Childcare
Resources

2019 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 in First Class Pre-K by approximately \$125 million incrementally over a ten-year period between 2013-2023.

2019 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 2019 Legislative Session. This increase will help 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 support the continued use of a “diverse delivery” grant 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 and faith-based centers). We recommend revised strategies and policies that result in more First Class Pre-K programs being placed in community-based settings



The Department of Early Childhood Education should 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. This collaboration should be supported and enhanced by Alabama’s Children’s Policy Council, the statewide body that coordinates services for young children across state agencies.



As the Department of Early Childhood Education expands access to First Class Pre-K, it should maintain the ten quality benchmarks 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 Benefits¹

Students who attended the First Class Pre-K program in Alabama are more likely to be proficient in reading and math compared to other students - and this academic advantage persists over time. This is the key finding of an ongoing study of Alabama First Class Pre-K conducted by researchers from the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, the UAB School of Public Health, and the UAB School of Education. This research was funded by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education.

Key Findings

- students who received First Class Pre-K were more likely to be proficient in reading and math compared to students who did not receive First Class Pre-K; and
- the academic benefit of First Class Pre-K persisted through the middle school years and did not fade out, or decrease, over time.

These findings add to previous findings that showed students receiving Alabama First Class Pre-K:

- demonstrate higher readiness for kindergarten;
- are less likely to be chronically absent;
- are less likely to be held back a grade; and
- are less likely to need special education services in K - 12

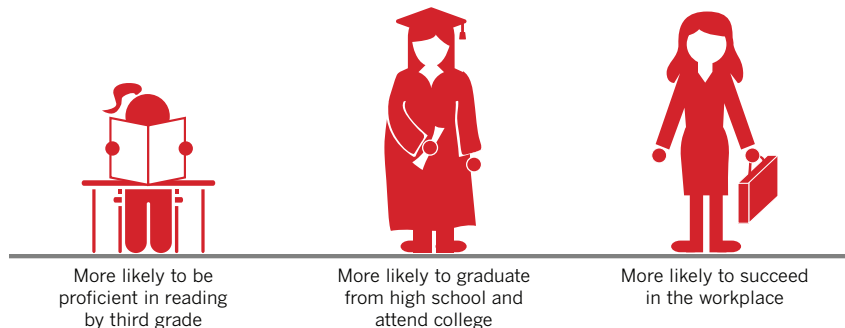
All of these measures produce savings to the education system that recur year after year as students progress through school.

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 Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (2019). *The Lasting Effect of Alabama First Class Pre-K*. Birmingham, AL.

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.

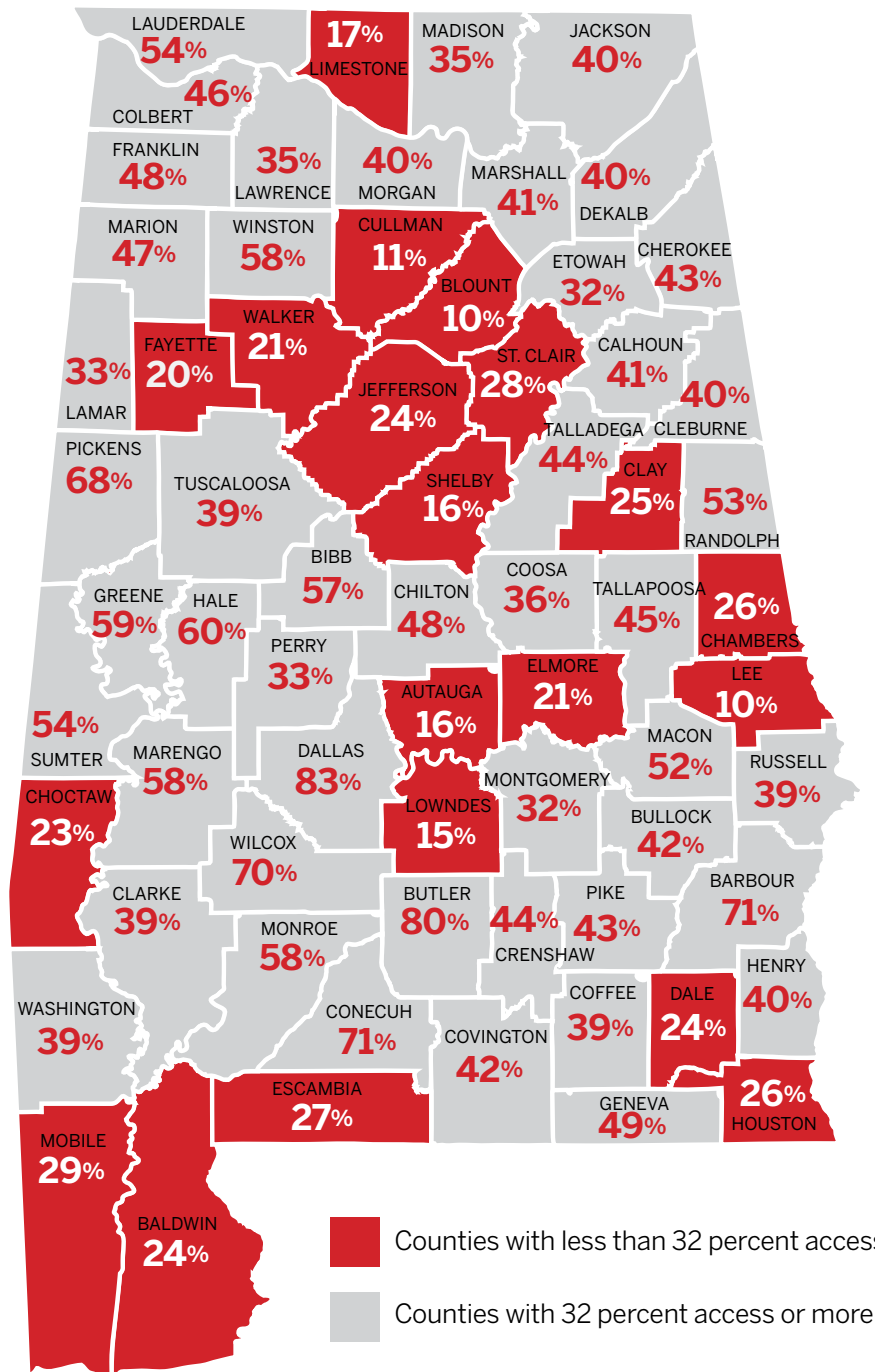
About Alabama's First Class Pre-K

First Class is Alabama's state-funded pre-k program. The Office of School Readiness in the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education administers First Class Pre-K by providing and monitoring grants to support high-quality pre-k classrooms in a variety of settings.

For more information, visit <http://children.alabama.gov>

Percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in First Class Pre-K

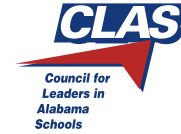
BY COUNTY





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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