

Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program



Performance and Progress in the Seventh Year (2007–2008)

THE NORTH CAROLINA MORE AT FOUR PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM is a state-funded initiative providing a classroom-based educational program for at-risk 4-year-olds designed to help them be more successful when they enter kindergarten. More at Four served nearly 30,000 children in the 2007–2008 school year, and has served over 99,000 children during the first seven program years (2002–2008).

Key findings from the seventh year of the statewide evaluation of More at Four examining program quality and children's outcomes are described below. These results are based on data from 2007–2008, including monthly service reports about program characteristics and the children served from all sites; observations of the quality of classroom practices in randomly-selected classrooms (n=50); and individual child assessments of children's growth in language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge, and social skills over the pre-k year (n=321).

The primary research questions addressed by this evaluation included:

- What were the key characteristics of the local More at Four programs and to what extent have they changed over time?
- What was the quality of the More at Four pre-k classrooms attended by children?
- What were the outcomes for children who attended the More at Four Program?
- What factors were associated with better outcomes for children?

Key Findings

Program Characteristics

- The More at Four Program has grown substantially each year since its inception, yet many characteristics of the local More at Four sites have remained similar.
- Approximately half of the children were served in public school sites each year, approximately one-third in child care settings, and smaller proportions in Head Start.
- The More at Four Program has continued to serve an at-risk and high service priority status population of children each year, as intended. The majority of children served are primarily from low-income families and were unserved in another preschool program at the time of enrollment. Almost one-fifth of the children served spoke limited or no English at entry into the program.
- Teacher qualifications have shown positive change over time, with increases in the percentage of teachers with a B-K license, and corresponding decreases in the percentage of teachers with no credentials.



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For more information, visit the evaluation website at www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval.

Classroom Quality

- Observations of global quality indicated that the program has maintained a relatively high level of quality as it has scaled up. Classroom practices were in the medium quality (but close to good) range for the 2007–2008 cohort, which is higher than the 2005–2006 cohort, but lower than the 2003–2004 cohort.
- Observations of the quality of the literacy environment indicated More at Four classrooms continued to do a somewhat better job of setting up a literacy-rich environment than consistently implementing literacy-related activities.
- The quality of teacher-child interactions indicates that teachers were fairly sensitive in their interactions with children, with little differences over time.

Child Outcomes

- Children exhibited significant growth during the More at Four pre-k year across all domains: language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge, and behavioral skills.
- Children at the highest cumulative risk level scored lower than other children in both the fall and spring for most outcomes, but demonstrated similar rates of growth, gaining skills at the same rate.
- Children with lower English proficiency levels scored lower than other children with higher proficiency levels in both the fall and spring in most areas. However, children at lower proficiency levels made greater progress over time in many areas.
- There were no differences in the amount of growth children exhibited on the basis of the global quality of classroom practices. In contrast, children attending classrooms with higher quality language/literacy practices or higher quality instructional practices showed greater gains in some language and literacy skills.

Overall, these evaluation results indicate that the More at Four Program has continued to provide services in accord with its goals and program guidelines through the seventh year of operation. As the More at Four Program has continued to expand, one concern has been whether quality would be maintained. Although the overall quality of classroom practices has remained relatively high, it is still not quite as high as in the early years of More at Four in some areas. However, children in the More at Four Program have continued to exhibit patterns of substantial growth across key school readiness skills. For children with lower levels of English proficiency, the program had even greater benefits. Taken as a whole, the evidence suggests that children are benefiting across the range of classroom experiences provided in ways that help prepare them for greater success in school. 



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