

Pre-Kindergarten Program

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, four-year old children with a demonstrated educational need participate in the system's Bright Beginnings Pre-Kindergarten Program. Bright Beginnings builds a literacy-based foundation that children need to succeed when they enter kindergarten. The program has five critical components that lay the foundation for early school success: (1) an aligned, written, taught, and assessed curriculum that is child centered and has a strong language development /literacy component; (2) community participation and collaboration; (3) parent/family involvement and partnerships; (4) professional development; (5) ongoing research and evaluation. Bright Beginnings is based on early childhood education best practices and research. Research supports that quality early intervention programs can do more to promote children's academic success than any other efforts. The program is funded through Title I and through CMS local funds, with approximately half of the funds coming through each category. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has significant community support for this initiative.

BENEFITS

Research indicates that high quality early childhood education enhances school readiness, improves cognitive performance and success in school, results in a reduction in grade retention and more frequent high school graduation, produces long term academic gains, and demonstrates that participants are more likely to be productive citizens. Early childhood programs are cost effective investments in the lives of young children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with identified educational needs. Those programs that have a strong parent involvement component promote stronger outcomes and foster better attitudes towards children's schooling and improved school involvement. Evaluation of Bright Beginnings suggests that participating children outpaced eligible non-participants, maintained gains, and in many cases approached the performance of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools kindergartners as a whole.

SITE DETERMINATION

Bright Beginnings pre-kindergarten classrooms were allocated where space was available based on the district's utilization standards. Projected student residences influenced space selection. To the extent that adequate and appropriate space was available, proximity was a guiding principle.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

For the 2008 – 2009 school year, Bright Beginnings students will be assigned based on their eligibility score, proximity, transportation requirements, and availability of space. Efforts will be made to minimize length of bus rides.

POPULATION TRENDS

Students served no longer live primarily in the inner city. The diversity of the students participating has increased dramatically, with particular growth noted among the Latino and Asian populations. The demands for service have grown in the eastern and southeastern corridors of the city.