

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

More and more we're realizing that by the time many kids start school, they've already fallen behind. So several new programs have been developed over the past few decades to give children an extra boost.

In the mid-1960s, the federal government established Head Start to ensure school readiness for children growing up in low-income families. This program provides health and family support as well as education.

The most well-established and substantial North Carolina program is the North Carolina Partnership for Children (Smart Start), founded in 1993 to help local communities meet the educational, health and social needs of newborns to five-year-olds. Every county in North Carolina has a local Partnership for Children. Many local Smart Start programs are looking for innovative ways to approach their work, and they are often excited about involving the arts.

Recently, Governor Mike Easley initiated the More at Four pre-kindergarten program to give at-risk four-year-olds a head start by providing excellent educational pre-kindergarten programs based on North Carolina standards. This too is a great opportunity for incorporating the arts so these children arrive in kindergarten ready to learn.

For more information on Smart Start, go to www.smartstart-nc.org

For more information on More at Four, go to www.governor.state.nc.us