

The Alabama Faith Council

ALABAMA FAITH COUNCIL STATEMENT ON VOLUNTARY PRE-K FOR ALL FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

There is ample evidence that high-quality early learning programs are critical for children to be successful in school and in life. Research shows that 85% of brain development takes place prior to a child turning five (5) years old.¹ However, many children do not have access to the high-quality early learning experiences that their more affluent peers have; forcing these children to begin school far behind their peers. Because the achievement gap starts before children enter school and only grows wider during formal school training², we must make high-quality pre-K available for all four-year-olds whose parents want it to provide all Alabama children an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life. Such programs give children entering school a more “level playing field”. Making high quality voluntary pre-K available to all four-year-olds is a justice issue.

FACTS:

- Studies show that children who attend high quality Pre-K are more likely to succeed in school and in life than those who do not. They are:
 - 57% less likely to drop out of school.
 - 74% less likely to become teen parents.
 - 41% less likely to require special education.
 - 33% less likely to be arrested for juvenile offenses.³
- Pre-K is considered affordable if it costs 10% or less of a family’s annual income.⁴ Because quality Pre-K programs are expensive, approximately \$5,500 to \$8,000 per child per year in Alabama⁵, a family would have to make at least \$55,500 a year to afford pre-K for one child.
- In Alabama, 46% of children live in low-income families⁶ (200% of federal poverty level or approximately \$40,000 for a family of four), putting critical early learning programs out of reach.
- The Alabama Office of School Readiness provided state funded quality pre-K to a mere 2% of Alabama four-year-olds during the 2006-2007 school year.⁷
- Because Alabama makes such a small investment in quality pre-K, children from low-income families enter kindergarten or first grade already behind in many ways.⁸

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OUR FAITH TRADITIONS SHARE IN COMMON:

- The Torah calls us to teach – “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.” – Proverbs 22:6
- Jesus rebuked those who sought to hold back the children – “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” – Luke 18:16
- The Qur’an expounds the value of learning – “Allah grants wisdom to whom Allah pleases; and those to whom wisdom is granted receive indeed a benefit overflowing...” – Surah 2: 269

IN VIEW OF THESE FACTS AND PRINCIPLES, WE RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

- To apply the principles of our faith to this important and timely issue.
- To host an educational program on early learning and benefits of pre-K.
- To voice our support and educate our communities about the value and necessity of quality voluntary Pre-K programs.
- To provide classroom space for an approved high quality pre-K site, where possible.
- To provide volunteers for pre-K classroom enrichment, where possible.
- To support and work for the expansion of state supported quality Pre-K until this crucial programming is available to all children whose families want to participate.

**SIGNATURES TO THE AFC STATEMENT ON VOLUNTARY PRE-K
FOR ALL FOUR-YEAR-OLDS**

Below are the names and titles of those who have signed onto this AFC Statement. Names are organized by date first and then by last name. Please note that official signatures are on file for each of the names listed.

Date	Name	Title and/or Jurisdiction
11/1/07	Lydia A. Aqeel, Representative, Masjidul Qu'ran, Birmingham	
11/1/07	The Rev. Father Paul Costopoulos, Dean, Holy Trinity/ Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Birmingham	
11/1/07	Rev. Thomas Evans, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley, Presbyterian Church USA	
11/1/07	Rev. William Leggett, Pastor, Unitarian Universalist Church, Birmingham	
11/1/07	Albert Manzella for the Right Rev. Robert Baker, Bishop, Roman Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama	
11/1/07	Rev. Ricki A. Mason for the Right Rev. Julian Gordy, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Southeastern Synod	
11/1/07	Rev. Wallace Noble for the Right Rev. James E. McCoy, Bishop, Ninth Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	
11/1/07	Rev. Brent P. McDougal, State Coordinator, Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship	
11/1/07	Rev. Dick Sales for Rev. John Mobley, Regional Minister, Alabama and Northwest Florida Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	
11/1/07	The Right Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Bishop, Diocese of Alabama, Episcopal Church USA	
11/1/07	The Right Rev. Lawrence L. Reddik, III, Bishop, Fifth Episcopal District, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	
11/1/07	Rev. Dr. Edward E. Rodgers, Second Vice President, Missionary Baptist Church, Alabama State Convention	
11/1/07	Rev. Ore L. Spragin, Jr., Presiding Elder, Fifth Episcopal District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	
11/1/07	Ashfaq Taufique, President, Birmingham Islamic Society	
11/1/07	Imam Abdul-Hakeem Nabeeh Um'Rani, Masjidul Qu'ran, Birmingham	

Date	Name	Title and/or Jurisdiction
11/1/07	The Right Rev. Calvin Woods,	Bishop, New Era Baptist State Convention of Alabama
12/20/07	The Right Rev. Will Willimon,	Resident Bishop, United Methodist Church in North Alabama
12/24/07	Cantor Daniel Gale,	Temple Beth-El (Conservative Judaism), Birmingham
12/29/07	Imam Raed Awad,	Birmingham Islamic Society
1/03/08	The Right Rev. Philip Duncan, II,	Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast
1/03/08	Rabbi Donald M. Kunstadt,	Springhill Avenue Temple (Reform Judaism), Mobile
1/04/08	The Right Rev. H. Julian Gordy,	Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Southeastern Synod
1/08/08	Rabbi Jonathan Miller,	Temple Emanu-El (Reform Judaism), Birmingham
1/08/08	Dr. Nancy Whitt,	Birmingham Friends Meeting (Quaker)
1/11/08	The Right Rev. Earnest L. Palmer,	Bishop, Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship of Alabama
2/18/08	Rev. Carol A. Landry,	Minister, Unity Church on the Mountain, Huntsville
2/18/08	Rabbi Steven L. Silberman,	Congregation Ahavas Chesid (Conservative Judaism), Mobile

FOOTNOTES TO THE AFC STATEMENT ON VOLUNTARY PRE-K FOR ALL FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

- ¹ Voices for America’s Children and the Child & Family Policy Center, *Early Learning Left Out: An Examination of Public Investments in Education and Development by Child Age*; February 2004., Shore, R. *Rethinking the brain: New insights into early development*. 1997; New York, Families and Work Institute; Shonkoff, J. & Phillips, D. A. *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC, National Academy of Sciences Presses, 2000.
- ² Testimony of Kati Haycock before House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education.
<http://www2.edtrust.org/EdTrust/Press+Room/Haycock+Appropriations+Testimony.htm>
National Governor’s Association, Center for Best Practices, “Early Childhood Care and Education – Closing the Achievement Gap”.
http://www.subnet.nga.org/educlear/achievement/childhood/childhood_problem.html
- ³ Schweinhart, Lawrence J., Ph.D., “*The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40: Summary, Conclusions, and Frequently Asked Questions*”
http://www.highscope.org/Research/PerryProject/PerryAge40_SumWeb.pdf
- ⁴ Special edition of “The Resource”, Childcare Resources, Birmingham, AL, 2003
- ⁵ Alabama Office of School Readiness, 2007
- ⁶ 2006 KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, MD, 2006.
- ⁷ Alabama Office of School Readiness, 2007
- ⁸ “Alabama Kindergarten Survey”, VOICES for Alabama’s Children, Montgomery, AL, 2000.

SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING AND RESEARCH ON VOLUNTARY PRE-K FOR ALL FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

Alabama School Readiness Alliance:

<http://www.alavoices.org/ASRA.aspx?>

(Promotes pre-kindergarten expansion in Alabama)

Center for Research on Children in the United States:

<http://www.crocus.georgetown.edu>

(Longitudinal preschool studies, Specifically Oklahoma's universal pre-kindergarten program)

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment:

<http://repositories.cdlib.org/iir/cscce>

(Research on preschool teachers and child care workers)

Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting:

<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/>

(Academic research on preschool and other early childhood issues)

Education Commission of the States:

<http://www.ecs.org/>

(State-by-state issue analysis)

Early Childhood Research and Practice:

<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/>

(Periodic on-line journal publishing early childhood studies)

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids:

http://www.fightcrime.org/issue_earlyed.php

(Promotes pre-kindergarten as an effective crimes reduction method)

Foundation for Child Development: <http://www.fcd-us.org/>

(Advocates for pre-kindergarten; resource center for journalists)

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute:

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/>

(Academic research, oversight of the Abecedarian Project, longitudinal study of long-term economic, academic, and social outcome of quality pre-kindergarten)

High/Scope Perry Preschool Project:

<http://www.highscope.org>

(Longitudinal study of quality preschool program measured over 40 years)

National Association for the Education of Young Children: <http://www.naeyc.org>

(Oldest and Largest national organization of early education providers)

National Center for Education Statistics:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003019.pdf>

(Latest national data on pre-kindergarten)

National Conference of State Legislatures:

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ.htm>

(Overview of state activity on a variety of issues, including pre-kindergarten)

National Governors Association:

http://www.nga.org/center/frontAndCenter/1,1188,C_FRONT_CENTER%5ED_5313,00.html

(Monitors trends in state-funded pre-kindergarten)

National Institute for Early Education Research:

<http://www.nieer.org/>

(Clearinghouse for research and news on preschool issues)

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child:

<http://www.developingchild.net/index.shtml>

(Advocate for science-based child development)

Alabama Office of School Readiness:

<http://www.children.alabama.gov/OSR/index.htm>

(The state department which oversees Alabama's state funded pre-k programs)

Policy Analysis for California Education:

<http://pace.berkeley.edu>

(Independent policy analysis of a range of education issues)

Pre-Kindergarten Research in Progress:

<http://www.prekrip.org>

(Tracks and updates latest research on early childhood education)

Pre-K Now: <http://www.preknow.org>

(Resource center for pre-k expansion)

Zero to Three: <http://www.zerotothree.org>

(Promotes healthy development of infants and toddlers)