

Early Learning in West Virginia Meets National Benchmarks

History: Twenty years ago, West Virginia first required kindergarten to last a full school day. Continuing to support early learning, the legislature passed a law in 2002 that required the state's 55 counties to offer preschool by 2012 to all 4-year-olds and to 3-year-olds with disabilities. Following this success, a new law passed in 2014 to make certain that third grade students could read at that level.

The Goal: To create a plan for third grade literacy, help counties promote early learning, and develop pre-kindergarten programs statewide.

What We Did: Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center staff helped the state to:

- Organize its work with a logic model to establish goals, collect data, and measure outcomes.
- Support the early learning advisory council and its committees over several years.
- Assist the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) to work with others who serve young children.
- Help local school districts learn how to support county reading campaigns.
- Tell the story about the state's work with counties, teachers, and families to improve early learning.

“This is the first time that there was a comprehensive birth to third-grade plan that had a logic model, tackled all the comprehensiveness, and really focused on capacity building at the core. I think it's paying off in spades.” *Clayton Burch, Chief Academic Officer, Division of Teaching and Learning, WVDE*

What Happened: By 2016, West Virginia:

- Met all 10 benchmarks for pre-kindergarten quality, one of only six states to do so.¹
- Served 76% of the state's 4-year-olds in 2016.²
- Children who attended pre-kindergarten in 2010-2011 scored 4.1 points higher on average in English Language Arts than students who did not attend pre-kindergarten.³
- From 2013-2015, WV increased six state ranking points on the 4th Grade Reading section of NAEP (47th to 41st).⁴

¹ National Institute for Early Education Research. (2015). The State of Preschool. Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

² West Virginia Office of Early Learning. (August 2016). Early Learning Annual Report.

³ West Virginia Office of Early Learning. (August 2016). Early Learning Annual Report.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2013 and 2015 Reading Assessments.