



The 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly made a targeted state investment in programs serving children in the year before kindergarten that are committed to delivering the highest quality experiences to the children and families they serve, and whose actions can demonstrate the return on investment that is possible with intentional, research-supported investments in early childhood.

Best in Class is built on program characteristics that drive results – high quality, supported interactions between adults and children based on developmentally appropriate experiences. Teaching staff are coached and supported in implementing developmentally appropriate environments, play based curriculum, and authentic observation-based assessments to drive individualized experiences to support children in reaching widely held expectations in the year before kindergarten.

### Eligible Programs

- HHS **approved four-year-old programs operated by educational facilities, public or private.** These entities must be compliant with ND Department of Public Instruction’s desk audits and federal Title program monitoring
- Federally funded **Head Start programs.** Head Start grantees must be compliant with Federal Head Start Monitoring Protocol
- **Licensed child care settings** (center or group), inclusive of those operated in connection with a church, business, or organization. These entities must be participating in our state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) with a current rating of Step 3 or higher

### Best in Class Program Expectations

- Operate for a minimum of 400 hours over 32 consecutive weeks, serving children that are 4 years old before August 1<sup>st</sup> of the program year. Programs operating at least 800 hours over 32 consecutive weeks are encouraged.
- Conduct a randomized selection process for enrollment, prioritizing 50% of slots in each section for children whose family’s household income is less than 60% of state median income or children who have an identified developmental delay or disability.
- If charging tuition, use the HHS-approved sliding fee scale
- Maintain 1:10 ratio of staff to children
- Implement a research-based curriculum appropriate for the age of children served
- Utilize Teaching Strategies GOLD for observations and assessment of progress
- Coordinate and/or offer onsite health screenings and referrals (developmental, hearing, vision, dental & physical)
- Incorporate at least ten hours of research-based family engagement
- Participate in programmatic research, including randomized studies that examine core components of program design and program outcomes.

## Participation

In our pilot thus far, we have fully committed the resources made available, serving 915 children in 36 different communities, utilizing two Best in Class coaches to serve 42 teachers. 99% of families completing the 2021-2022 parent survey felt their child had a successful year and were provided a quality experience and many mention their child's readiness for kindergarten.

Pilot Year 1 2021-2022



Pilot Year 2 2022-2023



## Child Outcomes

Developmentally appropriate, ongoing, observation-based assessment occurs when teachers are observing children during regular, everyday play-based activities on a continuous basis throughout the year. Best in Class teachers use authentic observation-based assessments to complete three checkpoints using Teaching Strategies GOLD® to document children's learning over time, inform instruction, and facilitate communication with families.

GOLD® developmental progressions are based on widely held expectations that describe the range of knowledge, skills, and abilities that children of a particular age typically demonstrate over a year of life. These expectations are based on the latest research in early childhood and are frames of reference that help parents and teachers focus on the development of the individual child.

## Beginning Trend Line Data

Programs in the first pilot year completed two checkpoints. Scale scores correlate moderately strongly with age and since the tool being used is meant to measure progress across skills that follow a developmental progression, these results are positive and promising.

