

# "Privatizing" Pre-K is about more than saving money <sup>[1]</sup>

Preschool Matters Blog

**Author:** Barnett, Steve

**Source:** National Institute for Early Education Research

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 5 Mar 2012

## EXCERPTS:

It was with no small measure of alarm that we learned this week of a proposal in the North Carolina legislature to completely privatize pre-K classrooms by the summer of 2013. It's part of a draft report that calls for pre-K to be the exclusive domain of child care centers and to be removed from the public schools that currently serve about half the state's preschoolers. It also would decrease eligibility from an annual family income of about \$50,000 to \$22,000- for all practical purposes, the poverty line.

If passed, this legislation will erase years of progress that made North Carolina one of the premiere states for delivering quality preschool education. In the process, it will relegate the children most at risk of school failure to programs that will more closely resemble babysitting than anything that enables children to start school ready to learn. Although it seems that the North Carolina legislature may back away from some aspects of the proposal, the proposal's core principles are likely far from dead.

For anyone wondering how policy leaders could consider consigning the state's disadvantaged kids to such a poor start in life, this should serve as a wake-up call. They should realize that those who are pushing to eviscerate high-quality state pre-K are not the least bit interested in the welfare of the children. Rather, they are pursuing a different agenda, seeking instead to separate preschool from public education. Rayne Brown, the co-chairwoman of the committee that came up with this plan told the Winston-Salem Journal she thinks privatization would be a "great thing to do and that it would help shrink government."

This is not just more of the public employee/teacher union bashing that has been popular of late. It is part of strategy to deny rights and escape responsibilities that adhere to public education through state constitutions. By shifting preschool to child care and out of education, prohibitions against funding religious education are eluded and children's rights to an effective education are made irrelevant. Make no mistake, this is a carefully crafted legal strategy spreading across the states wherever legislators fear that courts might force them to offer young children a real (and more costly) education or interfere with the legislature's desire to funnel public funds to the religious and business institutions of their choice.

To my mind, children's advocates who now almost uniformly describe preschool programs as "early learning" rather than "education" and support moving administration of early childhood programs out of state education departments are playing right into the hands of their opponents. As children's advocates care deeply about the quality of education and closing the achievement gap, they will find the consequences tragic. The legal foundations of public education make it uniquely suited to bringing all sectors-including Head Start and faith-based organizations-into comprehensive state systems with uniformly high quality standards and adequate funding.

-reprinted from Preschool Matters

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** privatization <sup>[3]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/03/%E2%80%9Cprivatizing%E2%80%9D-pre-k-about-more-saving-money>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/03/%E2%80%9Cprivatizing%E2%80%9D-pre-k-about-more-saving-money> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/privatization>