

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

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HOUSE BILL 74

Short Title: ApSeed Pilot Project/Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Warren, Blackwell, Howard, and Lambeth (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

February 15, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE "APSEED" PILOT PROJECT AND APPROPRIATE FUNDS
FOR THAT PURPOSE.

Whereas, ApSeed Early Childhood Education, a North Carolina-based nonprofit, is dedicated to improving kindergarten-readiness through early intervention; and

Whereas, ApSeed's goal is to ultimately reduce long-term remediation costs to the State by improving third grade reading scores; and

Whereas, ApSeed provides touchpads called "seedlings" to low socioeconomic status families with preschool-age children; and

Whereas, these preschool-age children become kindergarten-ready by learning shapes, colors, numbers, and letters; and

Whereas, the seedlings are loaded with family-friendly and easy-to-use learning applications chosen by kindergarten experts; and

Whereas, ApSeed was launched in 2016 by former North Carolina State Board of Education member Greg Alcorn to provide a significant return on investment; and

Whereas, privately funded programs are active in the following counties: Rowan, Davie, Davidson, and Yadkin; and

Whereas, State funding will provide a formal test in counties that represent size and regional diversity in North Carolina; and

Whereas, seedlings are deployed by Head Start, the North Carolina Prekindergarten (NC Pre-K) program, and various local health departments to serve our target market of low socioeconomic status families; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (Division), shall establish a three-year pilot project to implement the "ApSeed" program, a program designed to prepare preschool-age children, ages birth through four years of age, for prekindergarten through an interactive learning device known as a "seedling" (a device similar to an iPad). The seedling provides games varying in skill level depending on the age and capability of the child and advances in level as the child gains proficiency.

SECTION 1.(b) The following counties shall participate in the pilot project described under subsection (a) of this section: Forsyth, Hoke, New Hanover, Watauga, and Yadkin. Each of those counties shall select preschool-age children to participate in the pilot project the county, in its discretion, identifies as having the greatest need, taking into consideration poverty level as a factor.



1 **SECTION 2.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
2 Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (Division), the
3 sum of two million five hundred thousand dollars (\$2,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for each
4 year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium to provide for the equipment and costs associated with the
5 "ApSeed" pilot project established by this act. These funds shall be allocated to the five counties
6 participating in the pilot project, with each county receiving an amount up to five hundred
7 thousand dollars (\$500,000), as determined by the Division, for each year of the 2021-2023 fiscal
8 biennium.

9 **SECTION 2.(b)** For the 2023-2024 fiscal year only, the Director of Budget shall
10 also include in the base budget, as defined by G.S. 143C-1-1(d)(1c), the amount of nonrecurring
11 funds needed to support the pilot project established in this act. Upon completion of the pilot
12 project, any unexpended funds shall revert back to the General Fund.

13 **SECTION 3.** Within six months after completion of the pilot project, the Division
14 shall submit a report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human
15 Services, the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, and the Fiscal Research
16 Division. The report shall include, at a minimum, each of the following:

- 17 (1) The number of children served, by age and county.
- 18 (2) The skills gained by the participants as compared to those children who did
19 not participate in the pilot project.
- 20 (3) The extent of parental involvement in the pilot project.
- 21 (4) Total project costs, including any administrative costs.
- 22 (5) The amount of funds needed to expand the program statewide.
- 23 (6) Any other relevant information deemed appropriate.

24 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.