

KAREN W. PONDER

Karen W. Ponder is a Distinguished Fellow of the BUILD Initiative, whose work focuses on comprehensive state systems building including a focus on local coalitions, and she has assisted almost every state in some area of early childhood education and systems building. As the President and CEO of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., Karen helped to create Smart Start and administered the initiative at the state level, building and supporting community partnerships in all 100 NC counties over 15 years. She helped to develop North Carolina's pre-kindergarten plan and served on a state advisory panel to launch More at Four PreK. Karen has been involved in all aspects of early care and education, as a teacher, center director, board member, teacher educator and government policy leader. She studied at Anderson University, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University (Summa Cum Laude). She is currently a member of the Advisory Boards of the McCormick-Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, the Frank Porter Graham Executive Leadership Board, Reach Out & Read of the Carolinas and Project Enlightenment. She chairs the National Task Force that is creating the framework for a profession of early childhood educator. She and her husband live in Raleigh, NC and have two children and five grandchildren.