


State of Childcare in Buncombe County

DCDEE data as of Sept '23

Buncombe Partnership for Children - Jenny Vial
Update for Buncombe County ECEDF Committee
January 2, 2024





THE BUNCOMBE
WORKFORCE – BY THE
NUMBERS

- **Number of teachers = 808**
- **Number of administrators = 107**
- **Number of support staff = 76**
- **On average, the early care and education teaching staff made \$13.37 per hour and directors made \$24.00 per hour.**
- **WAGE\$ salary supplement program participants = 114 teacher/administrators in 54 facilities**
- **Turnover rate of WAGE\$ recipients = 19%**
- **TEACH Early Childhood scholarship program = 66 participants in 28 facilities**
- **Facilities receiving unrestricted Smart Start grants from Buncombe Partnership for Children to maintain high quality = 63**

STABILIZATION

Child care was identified as an essential service under the Stay Home, Stay Safe order. Centers that wished to remain open and agreed to meet updated health, safety and operational guidelines applied to NC DCDEE to remain open or reopen following a short closure. Enrollment continues to remain low due to workforce shortages. DCDEE continues to provide limited stabilization grants for salary increases.

	Feb-20	May-20	April-23	% change
Children enrolled (ages 0-12)	5473	921	4571	-16.84%
# facilities (serving ages 0-12)	113	54	112	-.88%



Workforce Impacts on Early Childhood Grantees

We polled funded providers to gather baseline data including impacts of workforce shortages

We asked providers for:

- Licensed Slots, Enrollment & Wait List
- NC Pre-K, Head Start & Subsidy Slots & Enrollment
- Workforce – Teachers, Assistant Teachers & Vacancies



Slots

<u>Licensed Slots</u>		<u>Enrollment</u>		<u>Wait List</u>
1,034		782		3,514
<u>NC PreK</u> <u>Slots</u>	<u>NC PreK</u> <u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Head Start</u> <u>Slots</u>	<u>Head Start</u> <u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Subsidy</u> <u>Enrollment</u>
167	151	123	113	231

- Providers are enrolled at only 76% yet are carrying wait lists more than 3 times their total licensed capacity
- NC PreK slots are enrolled at 90% and Head Start at 92%





PRE-K EXPANSION

Project Background & Update

January 2, 2024



Vision

All students enter kindergarten ready and fully prepared for success in school



Plan

Establish and pilot a local model to supplement and expand the existing NC Pre-K program to increase kindergarten readiness



PRE-K EXPANSION TIMELINE

Jan 2021:

Board of Commissioners asked Early Childhood (ECE) Committee to develop recommendations for expanding pre-k

Jun 2021:

ECE Committee presented recommended direction to Commissioners

Feb-May 2022:

ECE Committee endorsed pre-k expansion strategies from NC Pre-K expansion report & Commissioners vote to fund pilot

Jan-May 2021:

Ad Hoc Workgroup researched data and models for pre-k expansion

Jul-Dec 2021:

County contracted with a provider to develop strategies for NC Pre-K expansion

Jul 2022:

2-year pilot launched by Buncombe Partnership for Children



“Universal Pre-K”

January 2021 charge by Commissioners:

Explore the goal of achieving universal pre-k in Buncombe County

Ad hoc work group worked January - June 2021 to:

- Establish definitions
- Review data
- Study existing models
- Gather input & interview stakeholders
- Create recommendation direction



Key Elements

- Diverse, inclusive and equitable (for children, communities and the Early Childhood workforce)
- High quality program model
- Accessible for all families
- Reflective of family & community voice
- Data focused
- Appropriately financed (fully funded)
- Responsive to changes in the early childhood system



NC Pre-kindergarten Program (NC Pre-K)

- Provides free, high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible 4-year-old children
- Serves families at or below 75% state median income (about 200% Federal Poverty Level) & children who have risk factors (educational needs, developmental delays, chronic health conditions, English Language Learners, children recovering from trauma)
- High quality program with proven effectiveness
- 2022 utilization in Buncombe: 435 slots by 8 providers across 27 locations



Expanding NC Pre-K in Buncombe

- As of 2022, 35% of the 1,183 income-eligible children in Buncombe County were enrolled in the program, compared to 53% statewide
- My Future NC 2030 goal is for 75% of eligible children to be enrolled in the NC Pre-K program
- To reach 75% enrollment, Buncombe County would have needed to serve 473 additional children annually, requiring a minimum of 26 new NC Pre-K classrooms



Barriers to NC Pre-K Expansion

- Inadequate per-child reimbursement rate (60% of the cost)
- Stringent program requirements including teacher licensure
- Lack of pay parity with K-12 & inconsistent wages across NC Pre-K settings
- No ramp-up supports for programs to meet NC Pre-K standards
- Insufficient administrative funding
- Fractured, complicated systems
- The school day/school year model
- Lack of transportation



Model

In May 2021, the Early Childhood Committee voted to endorse the following recommendations from the pre-k ad hoc work group:

- Establish a local model to supplement and expand the existing NC Pre-K program to increase kindergarten readiness, including -
 - More robust support to existing providers
 - Access for new providers join the program
 - Career development partnerships to address the workforce desert
 - Infrastructure to address data gaps



Model Design

In July – December 2021, Buncombe Partnership for Children was contracted to develop recommendations on a local model for NC Pre-K expansion that:

- Supplements and expands the NC Pre-K program
- Offers more robust support to enrolled providers
- Creates access and support for new providers to join the program
- Includes career development partnerships to address workforce needs
- Builds infrastructure to address data gaps



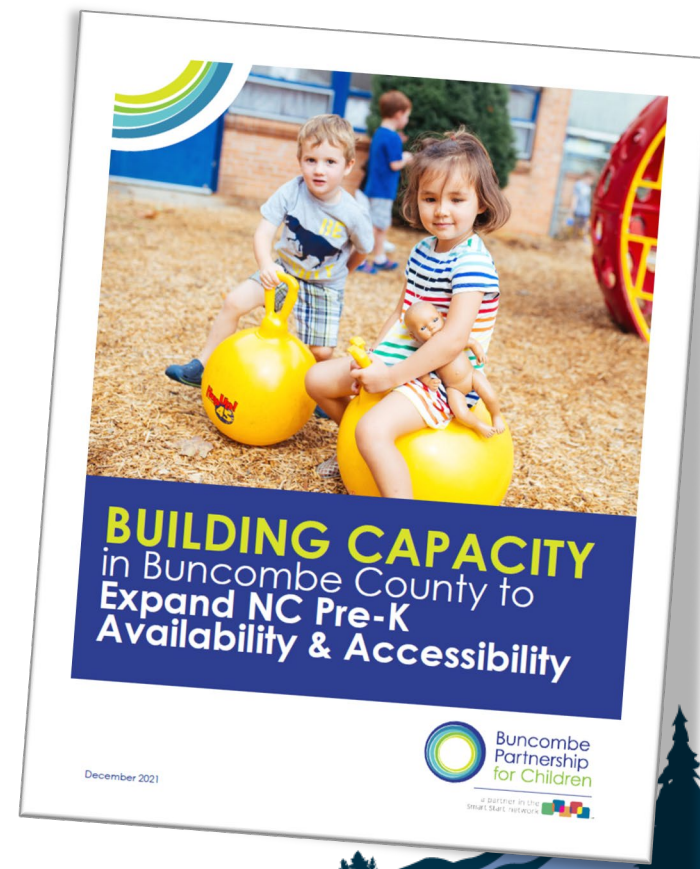
Intended Result

- Responsive to changes in Early Childhood Education System
- Position our community with capacity to expand NC Pre-K with State/Federal funding
- More children served
- Increased access
- Strengthened Workforce
- Enhanced data
- Higher levels of kindergarten readiness
- Narrow the achievement gap



Pre-K Expansion Report

- Produced by Buncombe Partnership for Children in collaboration with Asheville-Buncombe Preschool Collaborative with technical assistance from Child Care Services Association
- Recommends 6 strategies for building capacity in Buncombe County to expand NC Pre-K availability and accessibility
- Published in December 2021
- Endorsed by Early Childhood Committee in February 2022



6 Recommended Strategies

Increase K readiness • Expand access to Pre-K • Reduce racial & ethnic disparities

Barriers to PROVIDING

Fully funded Pre-K

- Supplements slots by 36%
- Pay licensed teachers on parity with K-12
- Ensure quality supports

ECE Education & Career Pipeline

- Ed Advancement Coach
- A-B Tech tutoring
- Logistical/retention supports

Ramp up to NC Pre-K Program

- Admin & teacher coaching
- NC Pre-K tools and PD
- Logistical/retention supports

Barriers to ACCESSING

Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment

- Online application portal
- Outreach & navigation
- Coordinated placement

Expanded access to wrap-around care

- Pilot innovations
- Demand & feasibility study

Expanded access to transportation

- Pilot innovations
- Demand & feasibility study



Cost for 2-Year Pilot: \$3,201,546

Increase K readiness • Expand access to Pre-K • Reduce racial & ethnic disparities

Barriers to PROVIDING

Fully funded Pre-K

- Year 1: \$874,200
- Year 2: \$881,000
- Total: \$1,755,200

ECE Education & Career Pipeline

- Year 1: \$131,300
- Year 2: \$131,300
- Total: \$262,600

Ramp up to NC Pre-K Program

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$132,500
- Total: \$132,500

Barriers to ACCESSING

Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment

- Year 1: \$86,500
- Year 2: \$87,950
- Total: \$174,450

Expanded access to wrap-around care

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$222,500
- Total: \$222,500

Expanded access to transportation

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$168,000
- Total: \$168,000

Governance, Administration & Evaluation

- Total: \$484,750



Funding the Pilot Program

- The Early Childhood Committee voted February 2022 to endorse the report
- The Board of Commissioners voted unanimously in May 2022 to fund a 2-year pilot program at the proposed amount (~\$3.2 M)
- Funding Source = American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF), one-time federal aid to build a strong and equitable response to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts, including education



Building Capacity in Buncombe County to Expand NC Pre-K Availability & Accessibility

- Administered by Buncombe Partnership for Children
- Period of Performance: July 1, 2022 - September 30, 2024
- Year 1 report published July 2023: buncombecounty.org/prekreport
- Funding current expires during FY2025 (next fiscal year)
- Currently projecting to have \$186,000 remaining that could be used extend the federal award timeframe & estimating \$1,069,000 additional needed in FY2025 to continue the program
- Early Childhood Committee voted on October 3, 2023 to invite Buncombe Partnership for Children to submit a proposal through the FY2025 grant process



Building Capacity in Buncombe County to Expand NC Pre-K Availability & Accessibility

Buncombe Partnership for Children - Deanna LaMotte
Update for Buncombe County ECEDF Committee
January 2, 2024



Six Strategies to Build NC Pre-K Capacity

Increase K readiness • Expand access to Pre-K • Reduce racial disparities

Barriers to PROVIDING

Fully funded
NC Pre-K

ECE Higher Ed
Supports

Ramp up to NC
Pre-K

Barriers to ACCESSING

Coordinated
Outreach &
Enrollment

Expanded
access to wrap-
around care

Expanded
access to
transportation

Fully Funded NCPK (slots & workforce)

FUNDING

- Supplement 432 NC Pre-K slots:
 - \$906,820 (to date)
- Support K-12 parity for private site teachers
 - \$82,986 (to date)

IMPACT

- 43 classrooms
- 432 slots stabilized (97% enrolled)
- 4 new NC Pre-K sites

- 43 leads at K-12 parity
- Avg 90% lead teacher retention
- ↑ professionalism & stability

Words from the field...

- On my license, I'm a 13-year teacher. Before that raise, I made less than a first year [K-12] teacher. I have to keep up a teaching license and also have to follow childcare rules. It is a lot of work to make so very little. NC Pre-K teacher*
- We would have had to decrease our number of NC Pre-K slots in favor of private pay slots had the county not provided this funding. -Director*
- We have two NC Pre-K classrooms with teachers who have over 20 years of experience. There is no way we would be able to pay... certified teachers with that many years of experience without the supplemental funding. - Director*

Higher Ed Supports (workforce)

FUNDING

- Higher Ed Coach (1FTE)
- Tuition or stipends
 - \$35,000/yr
- Barrier reduction & study groups
 - \$10,000

IMPACT

- 49 veteran educators
- Leverages T.E.A.C.H., WAGE\$, AWARD\$ Plus, Pell grants, local college programs
- Supported 22 programs

Words from the field...

• “I am so thankful for this project and my coach...! This has definitely helped me be able to get through college and given me so much support!”

• I am more likely to stick with my certificate/degree program.

• 82% definitely 18% somewhat

• I feel more supported as a professional.

• 86% definitely 14% somewhat

• I am more likely to keep teaching in ECE.

• 86% definitely 14% somewhat

Ramp Up to NC Pre-K (slots & workforce)

FUNDING

- Ramp-up Coach (1FTE)
- Stipends for participants
 - \$15,400 (projected)
- Curricula and assessments
 - \$25,800 (projected)

IMPACT

- 10 private classrooms “NC Pre-K ready”
 - All 4 BCS CTE classrooms
 - 5 other private centers
- Elevating quality/professionalism

Buncombe Pre-K Single Portal (accessibility)

FUNDING

- Bilingual Outreach & Enrollment Coordinator (1FTE)
- Secure application portal
 - \$12,000/yr
- Coordinated Outreach
 - \$10,000/yr

IMPACT

- Over 700 families engaged with ONE site/number/person
- Opportunity for concrete data
- Opportunity to expand to all pre-k apps

A background image of three young girls smiling. The girl on the left is Black with braids, the girl in the middle is White with curly hair, and the girl on the right is Asian with long dark hair. They are all wearing bright, colorful clothing (white, yellow, and blue respectively).

Words from the field...

- I had no idea where to start. Buncombe Pre-k helped me every step of the way... Hands down a great experience and amazing placement for my little one! We could have easily been left alone to figure out this new chapter in our family's lives, but with the help of BPK we are in such a good place now!*

Transportation & Wrap (accessibility)

FUNDING

- Community-based research
 - \$80,000 (contracted)
- Direct supports to families
 - \$75,000 (projected)

IMPACT

- 14 families getting monthly gas cards
- 4 families getting wrap-around
- 2 summers of care for those who wouldn't have that continuity



Questions?