

**Buncombe County Early Childhood Committee**  
**Workforce Development in Early Childhood Education Series, 2023**

This is the second in a 4-part series hosted by Buncombe County's Early Childhood Committee focused on workforce challenges and opportunities in the field of early care and education. From August through November 2023, the committee will focus its monthly meetings on understanding the issue, assessing the current landscape, studying promising practices, and forming potential recommendations.

**Session 2: Current Landscape**

**September 5, 1:00-2:30**

*What efforts are underway in our community to address the workforce crisis in early care and education? A presentation by Buncombe County staff will review the current landscape of workforce development in the field of early childhood, from what it takes to be qualified to work in the field, options for education, financial aid and ongoing training to an overview of programs and initiatives aimed at addressing workforce challenges. This will be followed by a panel of representatives from workforce-focused projects currently funded by Buncombe County's Early Childhood Fund.*

**Presenter:**

Rachael Sawyer Nygaard, Strategic Partnerships Director, Buncombe County Government

**Panelists:**

- Caitlin Johnson, Early Childhood Workforce Coordinator, Buncombe County Schools
- Tamara Reynolds, Chair of the Education Department, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
- Marcia Whitney, President and CEO, Verner Center for Early Learning
- Tasha Lewis, Director of Workforce Development Program, Buncombe Partnership for Children
- Deanna LaMotte, NC Pre-K Expansion Director, Buncombe Partnership for Children

## **Buncombe County Schools**

### ECE Workforce Coordinator:

- Increase the number of students entering and successfully completing the ECE pathway
- Increase the number of students (at all BCS high schools) enrolled in internships within the field of ECE, both off and on-site
- Assist students with obtaining certifications, trainings, and credentials
- Introduce students to career and college pathways through field trips, hands-on experiences, community partnerships, and meeting with ECE leaders

### Learning Labs:

- Serve 3- and 4-year-old future Buncombe County students. Strive to provide families with high quality, convenient, and affordable early learning opportunities
- Provide top-quality preschool programs through its collaboration with the district's CTE classrooms on 4 of our high school campuses: TC Roberson, AC Reynolds, North Buncombe High School and Erwin High School

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## **Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College**

### Blazing Trails Early Childhood Education Scholarship

- The AB Tech Education Department offers five degrees – three early childhood and two K-12 teacher preparation – and two early childhood certificates.
  - The majority of early childhood students are working full-time in the field while taking courses with us.
  - The grant through Buncombe County Early Childhood Education and Development Fund allowed the hiring of a third full-time faculty member.
  - Have been able to use the grant from Buncombe County to leverage additional funds and received a \$510,000 grant from Dogwood Health Trust as a result.
  - New faculty members are launching first ever early childhood cohort program. More than 20 new students starting in the fall cohort!
  - Working with SCRIPT-NC and other technical assistance providers from Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute to incorporate more materials on inclusion and challenging behaviors into our courses.
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## **Verner Center for Early Learning**

### Workforce Development Initiative Pilot Project:

- ECEDF has provided one year of funding for Verner to develop an Early Childhood Teacher Residency Program, which will hopefully continue and expand on after the first year.
  - Verner has hired a Director of Teacher Residency who has begun working on a curriculum and plan for the Residency Program. She is also building relationships with partners such as Buncombe County Schools' Career and Technical Education program and Warren Wilson College. The first Resident has already begun for the fall semester. Two additional Residents will begin in January, for a total of three this year.
  - In addition, the funded project involves increasing teacher and Center Director pay. They will be able to sustain pay increases that first became possible because of Stabilization Grant funding, and even expand on those increases during a year they would not otherwise have been able to. They will measure the impact of these pay changes on retention rates and on employee satisfaction measures.
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## **Buncombe Partnership for Children**

### Workforce Development Program:

- Designed to address the county's teacher shortage crisis through both the creation of an expanded career pipeline and a mentoring system to support new teachers coming into the field as well as increased training and professional development opportunities for all teachers.
- 24 hours of training by Buncombe Partnership for Children on topics including: Developmentally appropriate practice; Lesson and activity planning; CPR/First Aid; Health, safety, and sanitation rules; Trauma and resiliency; Anti-bias education; Managing challenging behaviors.
- Substitute placement in Buncombe County early childhood programs.

### NC Pre-K Expansion:

- Requires licensed NC Pre-K teachers in all settings to be paid on parity with similarly licensed K-12 teachers, and financially support private providers who have less access to funding than school system or Head Start providers to achieve this.
- NC Pre-K Program Coach to provide NC Pre-K specific curriculum/assessment supports and coaching for private centers.
- Implement comprehensive ECE teacher education advancement supports (tutoring, classroom release time, stipends) so working teachers can advance their education.