Funding Strategy Series

Presented by

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Early Childhood Education and Development Committee

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Goal of the Funding Strategy Series

Define a funding strategy for Buncombe County's Early Childhood Committee

- In alignment with **resolution**
- With consideration of **results to date**
- That maximizes our local government opportunity to influence positive outcomes within the system of early care and education

Where to go from here

Steps for determining a funding strategy for Buncombe County's Early Childhood Committee

- Revisiting our Authorizing Resolution from 2018
- Reviewing our Results to Date (program-level & system-level)
- Considering various investment approaches and the impacts associated with each
- Discussing how local government can be most impactful as an investor in this system

Board Identified Goals for Strategic Priority on Early Childhood Education

- Collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders for a coordinated system approach.
- Increase the availability of high-quality early childhood care and education with an emphasis on Pre-K programs.
- Address issues of affordability, both for providers in a sustainable business model and for families in access to care.
- Support a robust career track in the field of early education, with development ladders from entry level to highly educated, credentialed, seasoned professionals.
- Cultivate a system that responds to the needs of families, such as those impacted by trauma, poverty and addiction.

Resolution

- **Resolution # 18-10-16: To Create an Early Childhood Education and Development Fund in Buncombe County (October 2018)**
- Recognizes: the importance of the first 2,000 days of a child's life; the proven value of high-quality early care & education; the fact that less than a third of children were enrolled in licensed childcare; the shortage of childcare centers & workforce; and additional barriers for families including affordability:
- Authorizes the creation of a fund allocated to: creating new preschool and Pre-K classrooms to serve more children; implementing workforce development strategies to recruit and retain qualified teachers; supporting strategies for scaling up effective programs; and providing support services for children and families enrolled in preschool and Pre-K programs

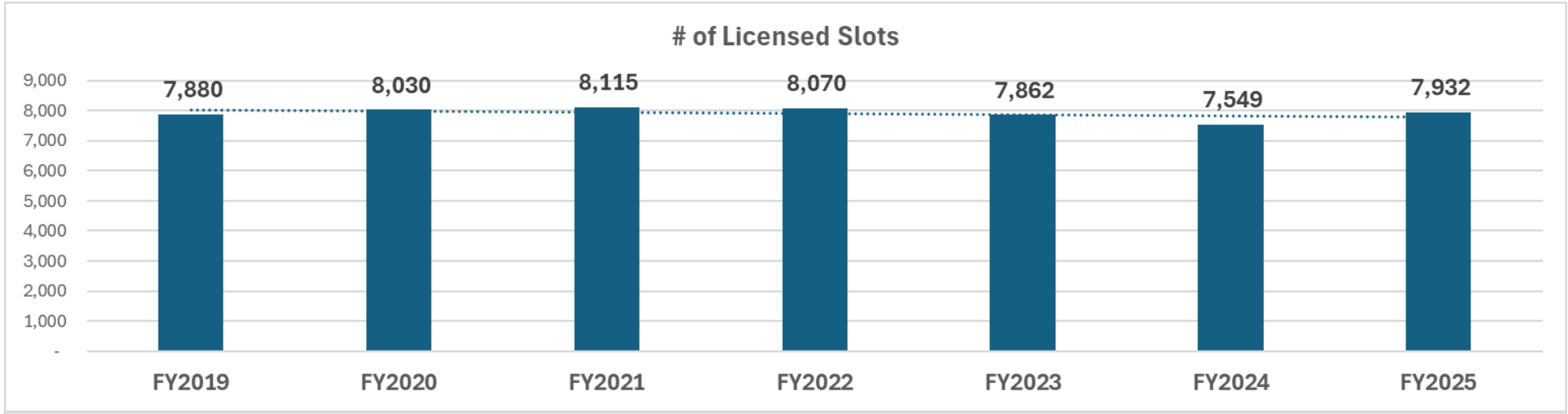
Measuring Our Results

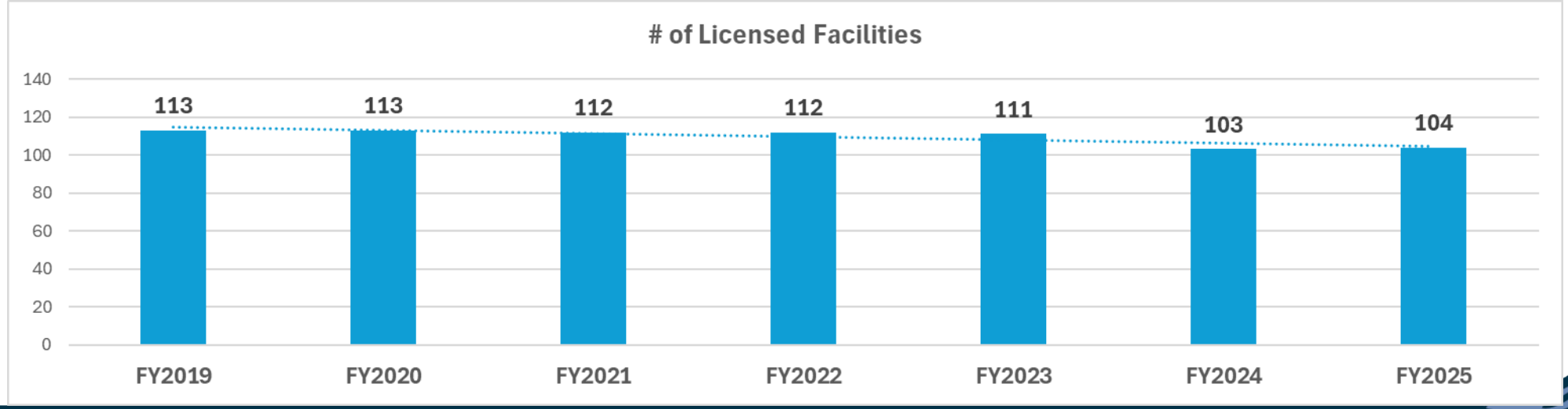
- **Program-level measures:** Each grantee enters into a performance contract that includes a scope of work, including:
  - How funds will be used (*budget*)
  - Services supported by the grant (*activities to be carried out*)
  - Measures they will track and report back on (*program & child outcomes*)
- **System-level measures:** County staff monitor big-picture community indicators that we want to see change as a result of the overall Early Childhood investments (*community outcomes*)

Program Level Measures

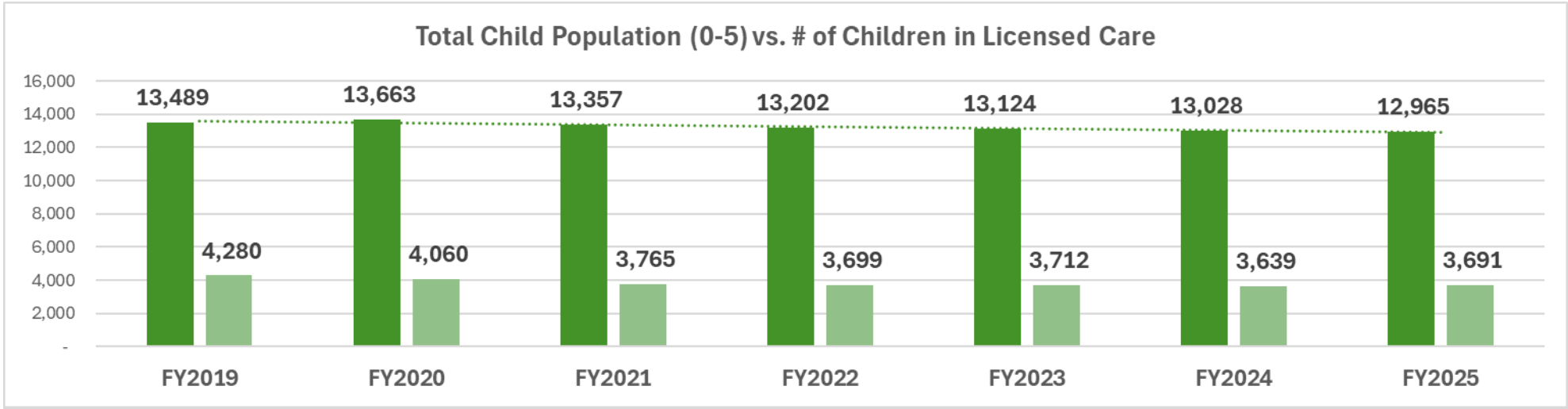
- Sample FY2025 Program Highlights:
  - 143 unduplicated enrollments in ECE coursework at **AB Tech**
  - 37 **Buncombe Partnership for Children** Workforce Development Program participants and/or alumni received offers of full-time employment with Buncombe County ECE programs.
  - 88% increase in children meeting developmental milestones at **Buncombe County Schools** Learning Labs
  - 87% of **Community Action Opportunities** students meet or exceed standards on school readiness based on Heggerty's
  - 13 parent support group meetings hosted by **Donald S Collins Early Learning Center**
  - 22 programs provided inclusion support, assisting 324 children and caregivers by **FIRSTwnc**
  - 66% reduction in challenging behaviors at Irene **Wortham Center**
  - 68 staff bonuses provided at **The Christine Avery Learning Center**
  - 100% of **Verner Center for Early Learning's** teacher residency participants employed full-time in Buncombe County
  - 11,206 hours of free/reduced childcare by **YWCA** Empowerment Childcare

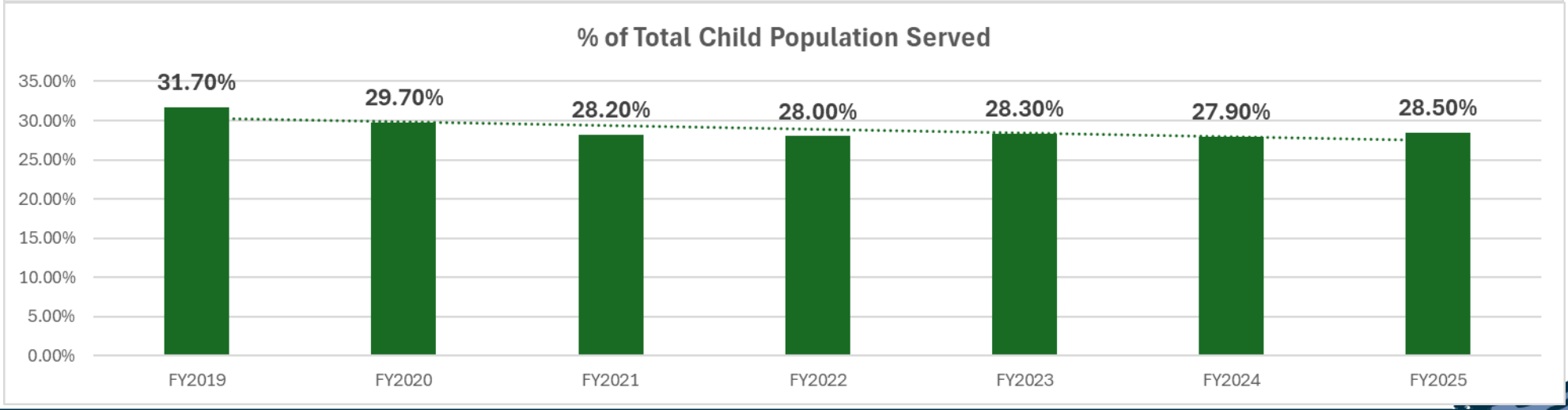
System Level Measures: Slots & Facilities



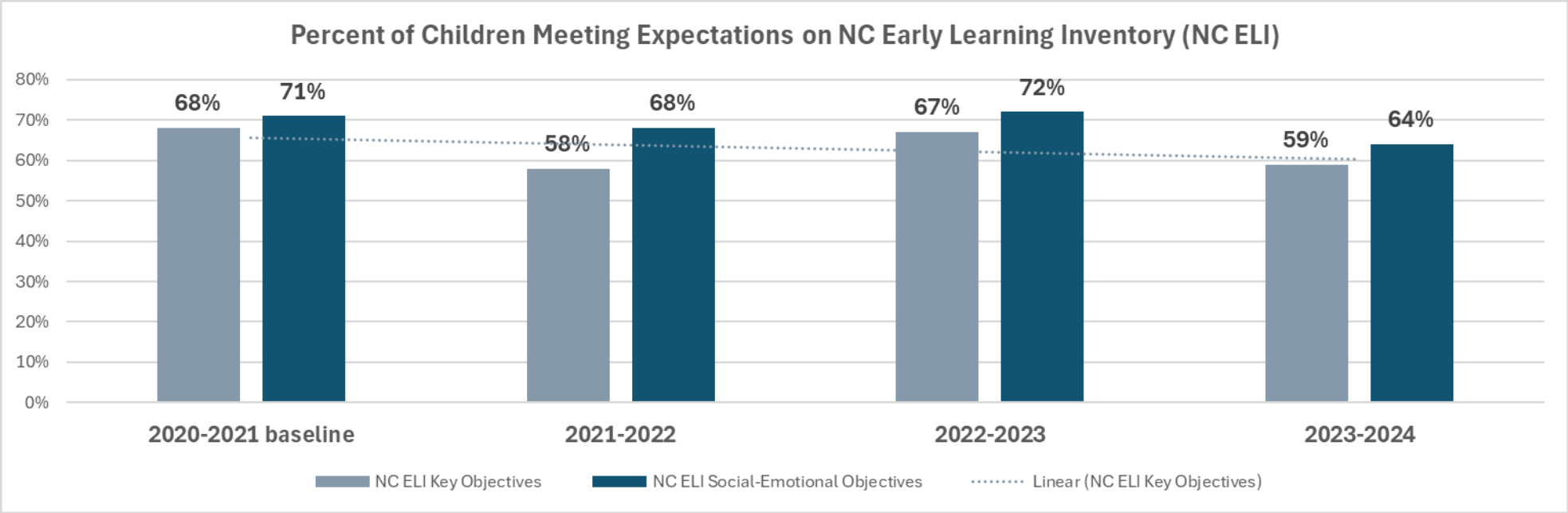


System Level Measures: Children Served





System Level Measures: Kindergarten Readiness



Other Information to Inform the Discussion

- How other counties that invest in early childhood supplement, and what does their data show? (Durham/Wake/Forsyth/Mecklenburg)
- How current wait lists work, and what is the latest update on the Buncombe Pre-K “Single portal”
- For Star Quality Ratings, why is Buncombe lower than state?
- For Workforce Education Levels, why is Buncombe lower than state?
- Do we have any data indicating what parents & families are seeking?
- What research studies exist relevant to our work?

Counties with Early Childhood investment

	Buncombe NC Pre-K	Durham Pre-K	Meck Pre-K	Wake NC Pre-K & Three School	Forsyth Pre-K Pilot
Local Pre-K Investment Model	Grant program funding variety of classroom initiatives	▪ New parallel "Durham Pre-K" program ▪Solo slots AND braided funding with HS, NC Pre-K, & DPS	▪ New, parallel "Meck Pre-K" program ▪Only in private centers; no braided funding	▪Supplement for existing **NC Pre-K** slots ▪Only private center NC Pre-K slots supplemented	▪ **Not funding SLOTS**. 30 pilot classrooms acoss county get enhanced PD and coaching, stipends for higher teacher credentials, and Family Advocates
County funding FY26	**~$4 million** Line item in county budget	**~$9.5 million** Line item in county budget	**~$23.4 million** Line item in county budget	**~$8.2 million** Line item in County budget	**$3.5 million** ARPA funds over 2 years
Total 4-5PK pop	3,172	5,362	19,157	19,992	5,674
% 4-5PK served	**51.3%**	**46.3%**	**43.2%**	**49.7%**	**43.5%**
Total 0-2 pop	7277	12193	44432	39392	13241
% 0-2 served	**16.4%**	**23.1%**	**19.1%**	**25.9%**	**16.0%**
Total 0-5 pop	12,971	21,825	79,005	56,976	19,164
% 0-5 served	**28.5%**	**30.8%**	**27.9%**	**46.0%**	**30.6%**

Pay and Living Wage Comparison

Average Pay

	Teacher	Administrator
Buncombe	$17.00	$26.68
Durham	$16.71	$23.00
Forsyth	$14.00	$17.31
Mecklenburg	$15.50	$24.04
Wake	$16.50	$25.48
Statewide	$14.42	$21.63

MIT Living Wage Calculator (1 adult)

No children	1 child	2 children	3 children
$23.86	$38.21	$47.74	$59.95
$25.55	$43.14	$53.44	$64.75
$20.85	$35.04	$43.11	$52.89
$26.59	$44.27	$54.08	$65.03
$26.59	$44.02	$54.61	$65.03
$22.54	$37.37	$45.60	$55.83

Just Economics Living Wage for Buncombe County: $23.15

https://www.earlyyearsnc.org/research/2023-north-carolina-child-care-workforce-study/county-breakdown/
https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/37/locations
https://www.justeconomicswnc.org/living-wage-certification/

Wait List & Update on Single Portal

WAIT LIST:

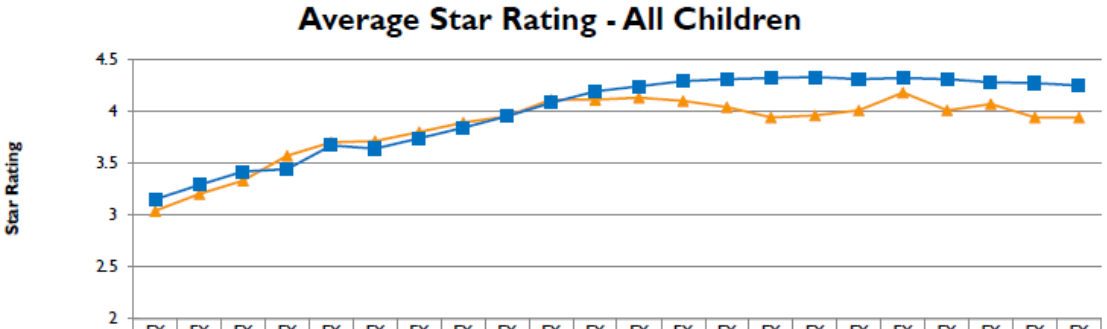
- Early Childhood Centers are operated by independent organizations, including a mix of nonprofits, churches, small businesses, and corporate/franchise businesses.
- There is not a universal waitlist, each center maintains their own list.
- Most families put their child on multiple centers' lists, which creates duplication of data.

SINGLE PORTAL

- The Buncombe Pre-K portal is in its 4th year, operated by Buncombe Partnership for Children
- Provides a secure portal for families to apply for NC PreK and Head Start, select their preferred location(s), upload required documents and get help from a full-time, bilingual outreach & enrollment coordinator.
- Families can still apply to Head Start directly without going through portal.
- There are no single portals of entry in any NC communities beyond funded pre-k slots. There are a few in other states that have created a 0-5 single portal.

Child Care Quality

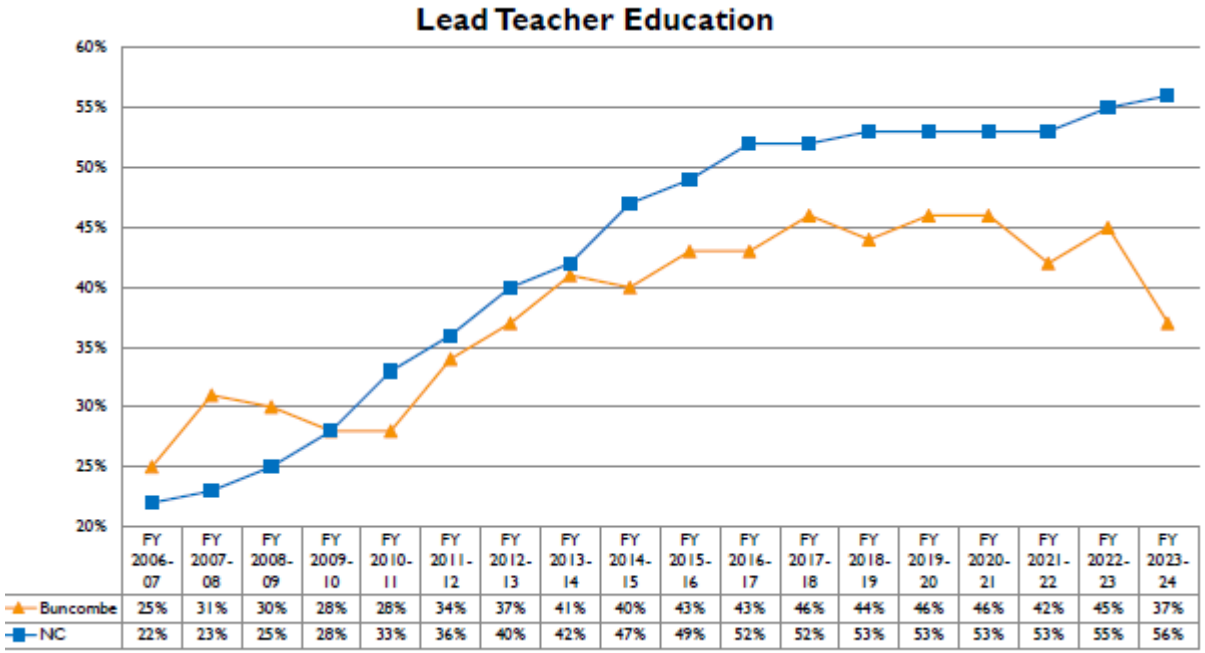
- Average quality rating is lower than state average
  - Large portion of Montessori programs (9% of all programs)
    - Many of them opt out of the star ratings, which means they default to a 1-star program, which bring the county's overall average down.
    - This may change with the new system because there is a Montessori pathway in that system.
  - GS110 religious-sponsored childcare facilities do not receive a star-rating
    - Buncombe has five GS110 childcare facilities



	FY 2002-03	FY 2003-04	FY 2004-05	FY 2005-06	FY 2006-07	FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Buncombe	3.04	3.2	3.33	3.57	3.7	3.71	3.8	3.89	3.95	4.11	4.11	4.13	4.1	4.04	3.94	3.96	4.01	4.18	4.01	4.07	3.94	3.94
NC	3.15	3.29	3.42	3.44	3.67	3.64	3.74	3.84	3.95	4.08	4.19	4.24	4.29	4.31	4.32	4.33	4.31	4.32	4.31	4.28	4.27	4.25

Workforce Education

- Workforce education is lower than state average
  - Not many universities in our area offer in person education opportunities
  - Turnover contributes to this



	FY 2006-07	FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
Buncombe	25%	31%	30%	28%	28%	34%	37%	41%	40%	43%	43%	46%	44%	46%	46%	42%	45%	37%
NC	22%	23%	25%	28%	33%	36%	40%	42%	47%	49%	52%	52%	53%	53%	53%	53%	55%	56%

Input From Families

Data from Buncombe County Government's General 2024 Community Survey:

- **Importance of Future Priorities for the County:**
  - Improving Early Childhood Education: 47% very important, 36% Important, 15% neutral, 2% Not Important
- **Place on Future County Priorities Over the Next Two Years:**
  - Improving Early Childhood Education: 15.6% (by sum percentage of respondents who chose the services as one of their top four choices)

*NOTE: 75% of respondents were in 1-2 person households

Studies

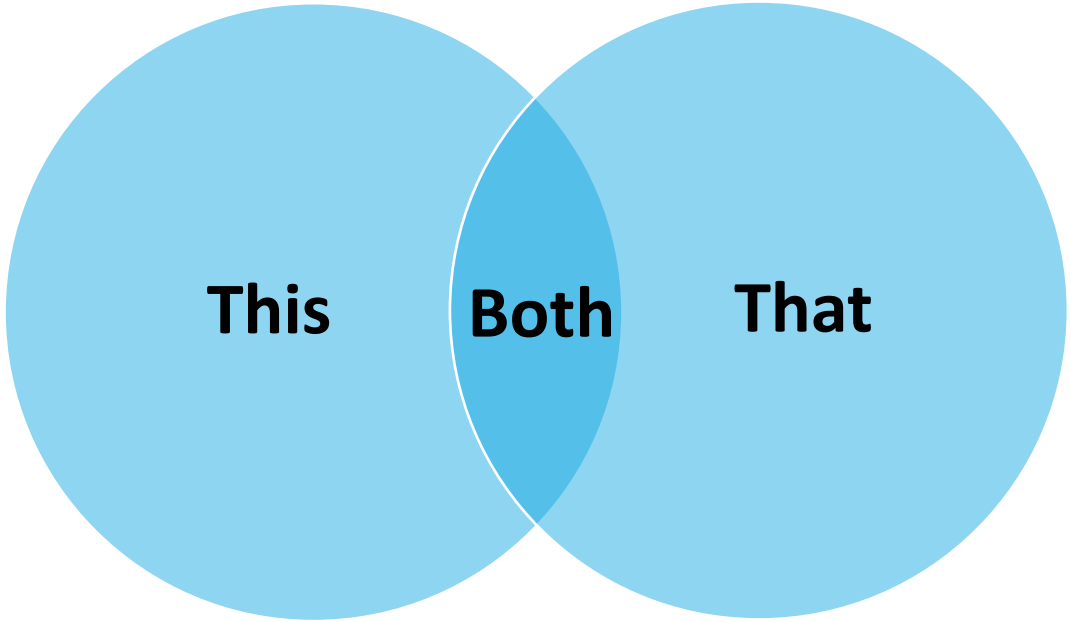
- Asheville Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative: The Key to Our Futures: Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool in Asheville and Buncombe County f6f8a9_a0eee2bdbf5948f294c1b3643bb899d1.pdf
- Franklin Porter Graham CDI https://fpg.unc.edu/projects/evaluation-nc-pre-kindergarten-program
- Heckman Equation: heckmanequation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FINALMoffitt-ECE-Paper2015.pdf
- Impact of NC's Early Childhood Programs and Policies on Educational Outcomes in Elementary School https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/items/732f3b14-1732-4b4d-94db-47d2b4d8fe4f.
- Perry Preschool Project https://highscope.org/project/perry-preschool-study/
- The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston - Blueprint Labs

Recap

We've looked at…

- Early care & education in Buncombe County including licensure, quality, data & context
- How early care & education is paid for and impacts of Buncombe's Early Childhood Fund
- Strategic Priority & Resolution
- Program & System Level Measures

Investment Approaches



	A focused initiative	A variety of projects
Description	All funds invested in one program with specific services and outcomes	Funds invested in a blend of projects across various priority areas
Example	NC Pre-K Local Supplement	Current portfolio
Benefits	• Deeper Impact/Easier to see the needle moving • Clear metrics and goals	• Helps tackle interconnected issues • Adaptability & broader reach
Trade-offs	• Limited scope • Neglects systemic solutions	• Diluted Resources • Hard to measure success

	Classrooms	Whole-system support
Description	Funding for organizations who are operating classrooms serving children	Funding for projects that are system focused and not operating classrooms
Example	7 current providers funded	AB Tech Blazing Trails & BPFC Workforce Development, FIRST Sunshine Project
Benefits	• Immediate impact for centers • Addresses operational needs	• Addresses structural issues • Cross-cutting benefits
Trade-offs	• Impacts small number of students • Short term solution without addressing root cause of broader challenges	• Slower to see results • Indirect support for children, families and providers

	Infant & Toddler Care	Pre-Kindergarten
Description	Funding for infant and toddler classrooms (0-3)	Funding for preschool/pre-kindergarten (4-5)
Example	Community Action Opportunities (CAO) toddler classroom	CAO Johnston classroom
Benefits	• Addresses most critical need where care is least available • Early brain development • Workforce access for parents	• Proven benefits for school readiness • Aligned to efforts around universal pre-k
Trade-offs	• Higher costs • Less direct impact on kindergarten readiness	• Doesn't address long wait lists for infant & toddler care

	Operational	Start-Up
Description	Funding to support general operating expenses	Funding to launch a new program or project
Example	Classroom support, Workforce development program	Verner Central expansion
Benefits	• Addresses gaps in operational funding for resource starved system	• Supports growth • Funding not locked into recurring grants
Trade-offs	• Programs dependent on county funding	• Lack of sustainability for programs



	New Projects	Renewal Funding
Description	Fund new projects within the fund cap funding at a certain time limit	Fund renewal projects with no time limit
Example	1st year of the Early Childhood Fund	FY24 only renewal projects were funded (no new or expansion)
Benefits	• Innovation, fresh ideas • Equity and access for a variety of organizations	• Proven track record • Consistency in services • Stability for the system
Trade-offs	• Uncertainty of success • Disruption of existing projects • Lack of sustainability	• Limited flexibility • Minimized competition, difficulty for other applicants to access funding

Open Discussion

