Buncombe County Early Childhood Education & Development Committee
Roundtable Panel

November 4, 2025, 1:00 – 2:30 pm
200 College St, Room 310

Purpose:

Buncombe County's Early Childhood Education Committee is responsible for engaging with community partners, solicit public input, and make policy & investment recommendations to the Board of Commissioners – including roughly $4 M invested per year to support local child care access, quality and affordability. As part of identifying and affirming what their investment strategies will look like going forward, the committee is hosting this roundtable panel session to hear from experts in the field about what is working well and what are the key challenges in the field of early care and education.

Panelists:

- Amy Barry, Buncombe Partnership for Children
- Candace Witherspoon, NC Division of Child Development & Early Education
- Erica Palmer Smith or Neil Harrington, NC Child
- Greg Borom, WNC Early Childhood Coalition
- Phillip Hardin, Buncombe County Health & Human Services
- Samantha Cole, NC Department of Commerce

Potential Questions:

1. Tell us a little about your role and the work of your organization.
2. What are some recent accomplishments related to early care & education that you're proud of? (can be either something you've been a part of or kudos to others for making happen)
3. What's something you're excited about when you look ahead to the next year related to early care & education?
4. Have you noticed any changes in the field over the past 5 years?
5. When we have conversations like this, a common topic that often comes up is "workforce". What are some key things to know on this subject?
6. Another trending topic in early care and education is "behavioral health". What would you want the committee to keep in mind when it comes to this subject.
7. What are your thoughts about striking a good balance between "child care" (to support parents/families who need care for their kids and support a strong economy) and "early learning" (high quality programming supporting child development and educational outcomes)?
8. Have you seen examples of cross-sector collaborations and/or investment partnerships we should be paying attention to?
9. What policy advocacy issues are you following right now in the early care & education space?
10. What else have we not talked about yet that is on your mind?