Buncombe County Early Childhood Education & Development Committee
Roundtable Panel

January 6, 2026, 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Virtual Meeting

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 sessions. **This session is to hear from other communities in North Carolina that are making local investments in early care & education.**

Panelists:

- **Cleveland** Tri-Share: **Dr. Shannon White**, Executive Director, Cleveland County Partnership for Children (https://www.smartstart.org/featured-initiatives/nc-tri-share/)
- **Durham** Pre-K: **Dr. Linda Chappel**, Sr. Vice President, Triangle Area Child Care Resource and Referral Services (https://www.earlyyearsnc.org/
- **Forsyth** Pre-K: **Leslie Mullinax**, Pre-K Priority Project Coordinator (https://www.prekpriority.org/)
- **Mecklenburg** Pre-K: **Dr. Mary-Margaret Kantor**, Chief Early Education Officer, Smart Start of Mecklenburg County (www.smartstartofmeck.org)

Potential Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself, including your role/organization.
2. Describe the program you represent, its scope and impact.
3. How much funding is supporting the program locally, and how much of that comes from County government? Corporate? Philanthropic?
4. How long has the program been in operation? What has changed since the beginning, and where do you think it might be heading in the future?
5. What current challenges/limitations is your program facing?
6. What challenges/limitations has your program overcome in the past, and how did you overcome them? Any lessons learned to pass along?
7. If you had more money to expand or enhance your work, what would you look to address first, and why?
8. What policy advocacy issues are you following right now in the early care & education space?
9. What are some bright spots that get you excited about the future?
10. What else have we not talked about yet that is on your mind?