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BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

This survey was conducted on behalf of Buncombe County Early Childhood Education & Development Committee, whose purpose is to engage with community partners, solicit public input and make policy and investment recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

In 2024, the committee launched a multi-year focused investment project to define and implement a new funding strategy to maximize positive outcomes within the system of early care and education. The focused investment project plan defines engaging impacted populations as a key objective. The committee formed an engagement work group to define populations and determine engagement methods. The work group defined families of young children as a critical population and decided to launch a countywide survey to learn about needs, preferences, challenges, barriers, values in regard to child care, child development, and parenting. The survey was geared toward parents & families who currently have children age 5 and younger (or have had young children since 2023) in Buncombe County.



Social media reel


"Tapped In" podcast

The survey was published on the county's public input platform in English and Spanish and was open for 6+ weeks from February 5, 2026 through March 25, 2026. Multilingual methods of marketing and outreach included: press release, social media posts with custom graphics and video reel with committee members, radio show/podcast episode with committee chair & staff, printed flyers with scannable QR codes posted at libraries, community centers and nonprofits, promotion at community events including United for Youth summit, and direct emails to child care providers and influencers requesting that they share the opportunity with their networks.

GENERAL FINDINGS

Demand for child care is high, availability is low. 87% of respondents have sought care, reflecting pervasive need. Average satisfaction with child care options in Buncombe County rated 32/100. This is a strong signal of systemic mismatch between family needs and available options. Availability ranks as the top barrier to finding child care. Many report that access is limited due to long waitlists, especially for infants and toddlers.

Employment is a primary driver. Families overwhelmingly report the need to rely on stable child care in order to work. Comments reflect that child care is central to economic stability, the necessity to work in order to afford to live here, given the cost of living as well as the need to work to maintain health insurance or other benefits.

Cost is a barrier. Families repeatedly convey frustration and stress over child care cost, which ranked as the second highest barrier to finding care (behind availability). Affordability is a determining factor whether a parent stays in the workforce. Participants noted that costs often equal or exceed one parent's take-home pay and expressed feeling priced out even with above-average salaries.

Trusted relationships with caregivers are essential. Survey respondents shared the importance of being able to trust the people caring for their children, but inconsistent staffing and high turnover make that difficult to maintain. Many parents want investments in educators and expressed the importance of paying teachers a good wage.

Families deeply value early learning and emotionally supportive environments. Families are seeking more than just child supervision, they express a desire for environments that support social-emotional skills, gentle discipline, developmental growth, neurodiversity awareness, and individualized attention. More than 80% of respondents indicated that it is extremely important to have environments that promote child development and social-emotional health.

Families desire community connection and support. Many respondents expressed interest in community activities, peer networks, support groups, non-judgmental spaces, culturally responsive and inclusive environments. Working parents describe having no discretionary time and the need for weekend/evening offerings and lower-barrier, more convenient supports such as online and drop-in options.

Families want system-level fixes. Responses demonstrate awareness that rebuilding child care is a county-wide issue, not a family-by-family problem. Survey responses demonstrate an appetite for more licensed programs (especially for 0-3), workforce investment, support for centers, and better infrastructure for home-based programs, backup care, after care, and summer care.

PARTICIPATION

The survey engaged 273 total participants who provided 4,619 individual question responses and shared 343 comments.

DEMOGRAPHICS

149 of 273 participants (55%) chose to share where they live. The City of Asheville is the largest subset of respondents at 34%, which is consistent with the overall percentage of County residents that reside in the city (34%) per US Census data.

Residence	#	%
Alexander	3	2%
Arden	11	7%
Barnardsville	2	1%
Candler	16	11%
City of Asheville	50	34%
Fairview	8	5%
Fletcher	3	2%
Leicester	19	13%
Swannanoa	5	3%
Town of Black Mountain	4	3%
Town of Montreat	1	1%
Town of Weaverville	12	8%
Town of Woodfin	4	3%
Buncombe County - Other	7	5%
Outside Buncombe County	4	3%
Total	149	100%

126 of 273 participants (48%) chose to share their race or ethnicity. White is the largest subset of respondents at 79%, which is consistent with the overall percentage of County residents that are identified as are non-Hispanic White alone (81.1%) per US Census data.

Race/Ethnicity	#	%
Asian	2	2%
Black or African American	6	5%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	10	8%
White	100	79%
White; Black or African American	3	2%
White; Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish	4	3%
Other	1	1%
Total	126	100%

148 of 273 participants (54%) chose to share their total household income. Over $100,000 is the largest subset of respondents at 35%, which is consistent with the overall percentage of households in Buncombe County that report annual incomes of $100,000 or greater (39%) per US Census Data.

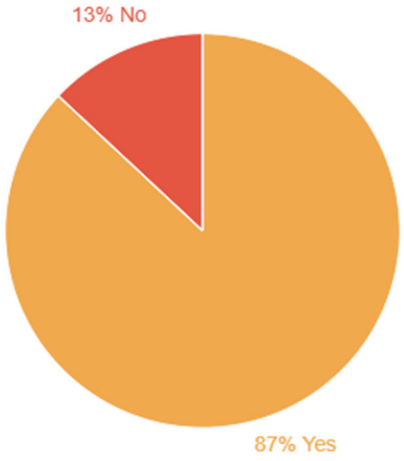
Household Income	#	%
$0 - $20,000	9	6%
$20,000 - $40,000	16	11%
$40,000 - $60,000	27	18%
$60,000 - $80,000	23	16%
$80,000-$100,000	21	14%
Over $100,000	52	35%
Total	148	100%

SUMMARIZED SURVEY RESPONSES

Question: **Have you looked for child care outside your home?**

Responses: 261

Result: 87% Yes, 13% No



Synthesis of 156 comments:

- Top drivers to seek care: paid employment (two incomes or single-parent), lack of family backup, and desire for socialization/early learning
- Top blockers or reasons to avoid care: cost/affordability, waitlists (especially infant slots), and health/safety concerns
- Operational pain points: non-traditional schedules, remote-work conflicts, and the need for part-time/occasional options

Question: **How satisfied are you with child care options in Buncombe County?** (0 = Not at all satisfied, 100 = very satisfied)

Responses: 162

Result: 32 on a scale of 0 to 100



Question: **What challenges (if any) have you faced when looking for child care?**

Responses: 162

Result:

Availability and cost were expressed at the top two challenges when looking for child care. These were followed by days/hours of operation, location and quality. The following list indicates the percentage of respondents that selected each challenge.

- Availability of spots (85%)
- Cost (84%)
- Days/hours of operation (60%)
- Location (50%)
- Quality (39%)
- Special needs support (7%)
- Other (7%) – e.g. Reliability, Turnover, Short notice closures
- Transportation (6%)
- Language barriers (2%)

Question: **Please rate each of these items on a scale of 1 to 5 based on how important they are to you when choosing child care.** (1 = Not important at all, 5 = Extremely important)
Responses: 171
Result:
At least 50% of respondents expressed that the following 7 items are extremely important when choosing child care:

- A safe place for my child to be while I work or attend school
- A nurturing environment that cultivates my child's social-emotional health
- An environment that promotes my child's learning and development
- Physical environment (e.g. size, furnishings, condition, indoor/outdoor spaces)
- A place where my child can be with someone they know and trust
- Convenient schedule/hours
- Affordable cost

	1 - Not important at all	2 - Not important	3 - Neutral	4 - Somewhat important	5 - Extremely important
A safe place for my child to be while I work or attend school	-	-	1%	3%	96%
A nurturing environment that cultivates my child's social-emotional health	-	-	1%	10%	89%

An environment that promotes my child's learning and development	-	-	2%	16%	82%
Physical environment (e.g. size, furnishings, condition, indoor/outdoor spaces)	-	2%	8%	34%	57%
A place where my child can be with someone they know and trust	-	-	4%	13%	83%
Support for children with special needs	5%	7%	30%	18%	40%
Quality/star rating	2%	2%	17%	36%	43%
Convenient location	-	1%	13%	52%	35%
Convenient schedule/hours	-	1%	6%	39%	54%
Affordable cost	-	1%	5%	27%	67%
Curriculum or educational structure (e.g. Montessori, Waldorf)	1%	7%	25%	36%	32%
Inclusive services (e.g. diapers, formula, snacks, meals)	5%	16%	30%	27%	22%
Enrichment opportunities like arts, music, and language	1%	3%	16%	40%	40%
Parenting engagement and support	1%	4%	26%	36%	33%

Question: **What else is important to you regarding childcare?**

Responses: 171

Synthesis of Comments:

- Families want safe, trustworthy, clean environments with transparent communication and consistent staffing.
- Affordability and availability remain the biggest barriers, especially given long waitlists and limited infant/toddler options.
- Parents prioritize well-trained, well-supported educators, recognizing that staff pay, stability, and treatment directly affect quality.

- Strong emphasis on social-emotional care, gentle discipline, inclusion, and developmental supports, including neurodiversity-responsive practices.
- Families value enriching environments, such as outdoor play, structured learning, diverse classrooms, and hours that realistically align with working families' schedules.

Question: **Which of the following parent support topics would you be most likely to engage with?**
Responses: 139
Result:
Community activities and learning activities were expressed at the top two parent support topics that respondents would be most likely to engage with. Additional topics selected by at least a third of respondents include: stress management; transition to kindergarten; helping children get along with others; and finding community resources. The following list indicates the percentage of respondents that selected each topic.

- Finding community activities for young children, 60%
- How to help my child learn new things, 50%
- Tips on managing the stress of being a parent, 41%
- How to navigate the transition to kindergarten, 39%
- Helping my child get along with other children, 35%
- Finding community resources for my family, 34%
- How to manage screen time as a parent, 28%
- What I can do to get my child to behave well, 24%
- Tips on nutrition and healthy eating, 19%
- Ways to help my child be more physically active, 14%
- Support resources for my special needs child, 12%
- Other (e.g. connecting with other parents), 2%

Question: **How would you most prefer to receive parenting support?**
Responses: 139
Result:
Self-guided websites or apps were selected as the top way that respondents stated they would prefer to receive parenting support, followed by groups with other parents and in-person workshops/classes. The following list indicates the percentage of respondents that selected each method.

- Self-guided websites or apps, 56%
- Groups with other parents, 47%
- In-person workshops/classes, 37%
- Printed materials, 36%

- Online sessions, 34%
- Parenting coaches, 16%
- Other (e.g. more child care options), 2%

Question: **What barriers do you face as a parent in asking for help or engaging with services?**
Responses: 64
Synthesis of Comments:

- Time was expressed as the #1 barrier. Working parents cannot attend offerings scheduled during traditional hours, and evening/weekend options are rare.
- Families face information and navigation barriers. They don't know where to look, resources are hidden or outdated, and there's no clear entry point.
- Cost, eligibility limits, and lack of childcare prevent families from accessing help even when they want to.
- Location, transportation, and limited availability make many services impractical for families outside central Asheville.
- Emotional barriers such as fear of judgment, past negative experiences, and stigma discourage some parents from asking for help.

Question: **What else is important to you regarding parenting support?**
Responses: 29
Synthesis of Comments:

- Parents need clear, accessible, centralized information about services, development, and available supports.
- Time, scheduling, and convenience are major barriers; families want weekend/evening options, backup care, and wraparound supports.
- Families value community connection, nonjudgmental spaces, and culturally responsive guidance.
- There is strong demand for practical supports such as aftercare, summer camps, vetted babysitters, and reliable childcare during closures.
- Parents recognize that system-level improvements such as supporting childcare licensing and staffing directly strengthen parenting support.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Give a few reasons why you have looked for child care outside of your home or why you have not done so.

- I was working full time and needed childcare
- We both work full time and have a 2.5 year old, therefore we needed childcare.
- I was in all of the waitlists for infants I could find and couldn't get in

- I stopped looking and left my job because I couldn't find a daycare and paying a nanny meant paying more than how much I would bring home after taxes
- I have looked for part-time childcare to ease the load on myself and my husband. I work full time, but he works at home and it has been challenging for him to balance both remote work and childcare. This has led to us looking at options for childcare during some days of the week.
- We both worked at one point. I wanted our child to have peer interaction and be prepared to start kindergarten.
- Both parents work full time
- Both parents have to work to afford cost of living
- Both my husband and I work full-time and do not have family that can provide support.
- Both working parents with aging grandparents who are unable to care for our child.
- Cause I needed someone to take care of my child, but it was too expensive
- I work full-time and while I would love to be home with my child, that is not possible.
- 2 full-time working parents means that we needed non-home childcare.
- Both parents work full-time; providing at-home childcare ourselves isn't even an option. Hiring someone to do it is way too expensive, and also doesn't provide the socialization that's so crucial to a successful school transition. The germs are a whole other issue, but at least we got the worst of that out of the way early...
- We looked for child care outside of the home primarily for financial and healthcare reasons. If a certain parent doesn't work full-time, our health insurance goes away, and we are very concerned about the recent cuts to ACA insurance. We are also happy that our child can have pro-social experiences in a childcare setting.
- Two working parents with flexible schedules that preclude us from both being available for childcare at certain times.
- I'm a single parent, so need childcare in order to work full-time.
- Needed childcare as both parents work.
- My spouse and I both work full time.
- Yes
- For mantaining life balance, works schedules, and finding time for ourselves and the rest of the family. It's very expensive to find consistent, safe, affordable options.
- Single-parent home
- My kid is in school now
- Need care during Full time work
- Looked more for parents night out type of deals, especially for the younger ones.
- Work schedule
- We both work, and without family here, it was our only option.

- My fiance and I have opposite schedules to try and have coverage but there's still some overlap where we need coverage. Plus, I feel like my child will get a better education outside of the home.
- Work, socialization
- We need childcare outside of the home because my spouse and I have to work and need childcare to do so. In home care is too expensive and we value the socialization of preschool.
- So we can work; socialization
- My husband and I work full time. We value the socialization skills and skills to prepare our child for kindergarten.
- I have looked for childcare so my children have care while my partner and I work fulltime. I would prefer my children have social/emotional and preacademic opportunities related to early childcare versus keeping them home in my care.
- I work from home and my husband stays with the children. We currently have 2 under 2 plus one 4 year old and it’s much more than he can do all day on his own. We have found care for our 1 year old to help with that. As for our 4 year old, she is beyond ready for social engagement and a classroom setting where she can learn from the brightest teachers and make friends while doing so.
- Both parents work full-time.
- both parents work full time
- I am a full time home caregiver
- Work, socializing
- Both parents in my household need to work to afford housing/car/life expenses. We also value the social skills being in a classroom provides for our son.
- Because both myself and husband need to work. Its crucial we find care for our child that is affordable and safe. We both early morning to late in the day. Even if we have had support from grandfather but we need alternative. Without childcare it would truly impact our household. So childcare in the Buncombe county area and in other counties is very much needed.
- We are two working parents
- My husband and I both work full time.
- My husband and I both teach and need child care.
- Im currently a stay at home mom so I stay with my daughter at home. But we did want to look into preschool to help early intervention to help her before kindergarten and for socializing. It has went wonderfully!
- We do not have any other option- my husband and I both work full time and do not have family members that could watch our child. We also find the value in socialization and early learning.

- No children under 5 in the home
- The need to return to work full-time; 2.) A way to incorporate social enrichment into the child's day-to-day
- I am lucky enough to work from home but I cannot get much work done if the kids are there.
- My partner and I both work full time
- My spouse and I work from home, and want to continue doing so without sacrificing our child's care. We have no family members nearby who can help.
- "En este momento ya soy tia abuela y solo.cuido al niño poco tiempo" / At this point, I am already a great-aunt, and I only look after the child for a short time.
- As two public school teachers who both advise after-school extracurricular activities, my wife and I are away from home for extended hours each day. We do not have family or close friends nearby who can help care for our toddler, so we must rely on outside childcare services. The cost has been a significant financial strain, and we are hoping for an opening for our daughter at TCRHS next year. Twice a month, I write to our state lawmakers to share our situation, one that I know many families across North Carolina are also facing.
- Working full time
- I work full time and can't stay home because life is too expensive
- So that i can work and pay bills
- I am hoping to re-enter the workforce
- Both my husband and I work full time. We must have somewhere quality for our child to be while we work. Each place our child attended it was important they learn social and emotional skill as well as learn general things to ready them for kindergarten.
- Both parents are working parents
- Daycare across the country show up on the news about kids being mistreated or forgotten in some way on the bus inside the facility, there needs to be cameras in daycare for parents to see in real time. I have a friend thats a daycare worker and she says all the time the ratio for teachers vs kids is not realistic and too much work and being stressed bc of lack of help at daycare. More daycare need to bring kids outside and invest in Montessori type of schooling, not fully Montessori but incorporating it into the day to day.
- Full time working parents
- Need care due to both parents working full time
- Both parents work full time.
- Will need care in the future for my infant twins
- I have to work. Full time. My wife works full time

- My husband and I work full time, we have no family in town to help with childcare, and we wanted our daughter to gain social skills through playing with other kids.
- My spouse and I both have full time jobs and careers.
- Two parents that work full time.
- I work
- I as a mother realized I had to go back to work but with the waitlist being so long and the fear I have with putting my child in childcare scared me.
- Yes! Single working mom
- We both work
- Both parents full time workers
- Working parents
- I'm the grandma, helping my daughter seek child care for an infant. She will have a full-time work schedule following her maternity leave. Her husband also works full time. Particularly with the measles outbreak in SC, she prefers a small home-based program to a center. There are no slots for infants in either one that we can find! The only option seems to be an unlicensed nanny for $25 an hour.
- Both parents have full time jobs and cannot afford for one or the other to stay home full time.
- 2 working parents; socialization and learning
- Extra educational instruction
- To work!
- return to work outside the home
- Expenses, hours
- Both parents work full time
- working parents
- My husband and I both work full time.
- We need full time care due to our work schedules. We value socialization of our daughter at preschool. We value the educational environment of a preschool.
- Both parents working full time. Neither make enough for the other to not work. In home nanny care is the same price for limited hours for a couple days as it is for full time, extended hours every day at a childcare facility.
- I have a full time job and needed a trusted person to watch my sons, while I worked.
- I wanted my kids to go to preschool to help them socialize with other children, learn new skills, and develop a routine in a safe, supportive environment.
- For socialization and kindergarten readiness
- It was two-fold. I needed to be able to complete chores/tasks/errands throughout the day. Having my child attend daycare provides invaluable social and educational time for her growing mind.

- I have a full time job and need assistance during the day
- I have because I work remotely
- I work remotely and my kids are attached to me. I also want socialization and more attention than I can give them / different toys etc.
- Both parents work full time outside of home. Daycare was hugely beneficial to my children's development of social skills, phonetic skills, and math skills
- "Working hours and need quiet in the house
- stimulation for the child outside of the home
- extra care"
- to maintain employment
- Work full-time as a single parent and want my child to be ready for kindergarten.
- Had a child in October 2025, and both parents needed to go back to work 4 months after our child's birth. In home care is less stable (lots of nanny turn over) than daycare.
- We both have to work, we cannot pay our bills on one salary. That said we value the things our daughter's caretakers and friends have added to her life.
- My wife and I both work and dont have any family or friends local.
- I need to work to live
- I have to work.....
- I've looked and looked and looked, the expense is basically unreachable for any working families. Any affordable care has a waiting list, like years long. Bottom line is unless you have family options there is effectively no childcare options for working families.
- "I have a job and need to work to feed myself and my family. You cannot work full time and be the caretaker of children. Plus, children benefit from socialization.
- We need more infant and childcare facilities and services for our community. Did they vanish after Covid? Put my tax dollars toward funding supplemental programs, expanding programs, and making it more affordable for lower income residents. "
- Both parents work full time and it's good for their growth and development to enable their social skills as they grow and prepare for pre-k and K
- Need two incomes in order to survive
- I am a stay at home mom currently so I have no need to at the moment. When I was working full time and my husband full time as well, we just alternated our schedule because we did not trust the childcare around us to watch our kids in a way that enriches their development the way we would like.
- Because my spouse and I both have to work to afford to live here we have no choice to stay home with our children.

- Financial reasons also we want to wait until our child is three to enroll him due to benefits in development
- We both have to work to keep our household running/pay bills (Asheville is expensive!); therefore, we want good childcare professionals to care for our son so he can thrive and make friends his age.
- So I am able to work and provide.
- I have looked for childcare in order to provide my child with socialization and academic skills.
- I had to in order to work.
- Childcare is so costly that one of us would be bringing home next to $0 after paying for childcare. Even having a nanny would be hard because they want to be paid a lot, but also bring their own child. I'm not going to pay someone all that money to watch their own child and give mine minimal attention. I also don't trust that others won't be on their screen or give my child screen time.
- So that me and my spouse can work and our baby can have social and educational enrichment.
- So I can work and support my family
- My husband and I both work full time
- Working full time
- I have a full time job and so does my husband.
- My husband and I both work and need someone to watch our kid.
- "Work
- Socialization
- It would be fun and exciting "
- To be able for myself and my spouse to work. Also to help my kids learn new skills and interact with other kids.
- I'm a full time working mother. I bring my child to work with me, but he's getting to be too old to be productive as I work (11mo). There are no viable options for parents. My husband and I earn higher than average salaries for the area, and cannot find a decent option for under $1200 a month for LESS than full time childcare. How are parents supposed to afford food, groceries, housing?
- It's impossible to survive on a single income in this area.
- Trying to Work fulltime to survive
- Parents have to work.
- My spouse and I both have full time jobs
- I considered going back to work full-time. We decided against this as if we put our child in childcare the cost would not be worth the benefit from a FT job. Sickness

was also a concern as there would be significantly more and this would than put my spouse or I out of work and be a risk to employment.

- Both parents are employees full time, so we need childcare to enable us to continue working.
- I have to work to help provide for our family.
- to help me work
- I have to work to take care of me and my daughter, I'm a single mom
- My husband and I both work a job to be able to afford to live.
- bc I have a full time job at a school. It has been extremely helpful having a preschool in my school. My kids were able to come to work with me aged 3 and up to attend preschool.
- I work full-time and dont have friends/family support to help
- In order to work full time I have to have childcare.
- My spouse and I both work full time
- Both parents work full time outside the home and we do not have family to help with childcare.
- Because I need to work for my kids if I don't have a babysitter than what can I do with a job
- To balance our work/life balance, enrichment and engagement for our children, socialization for our children, quality of life and family relationships.
- Both parents work full time and we have a 2 year old.
- I need diapers and wipes because they are expensive in stores.
- So I can find a fulltime job that will support my family with hours outside of school hours
- Due to work and college schedules. I also want my child to get the social skills before going into school.
- I have a full-time job and need childcare.
- My wife and I both work full time
- Full time work
- "Part time work to support family and needed childcare.
- I am burned out as my husband works 60+ hours to pay bills. "
- Support due to parent employment, enrichment and socialization for the child
- Because I was a single parent and I had no other option
- My husband and I both work full time.
- So I can go back to work.
- My spouse and I both work outside of the home.
- To be able to work to afford living in Asheville

- My mental health, separating from my partner, space to meet my needs. For my child I value the opportunity to socialize with peers, learn from other caregivers, and experience a more emotionally regulated mama. Also capitalism and cost of living makes it necessary to work; employment is another reason I require childcare.
- Because my husband and I work full time and cannot afford a full time nanny. We also value the socialization and experiences that come from a caring childcare environment.
- Work, primarily. We need more hours to work but it's also more expensive to get childcare than to try to juggle both.

What else is important to you in child care?

- AFFORDABLE
- Cameras available so I can see my child throughout the day when I miss them while at work
- More outdoor time than indoor
- Children of the same age
- Gentle instruction and explanation when child makes mistakes.
- No shaming. No timeouts
- 100% supervision
- Don't force to share. Explain to child who wants toy someone else has that it's that child's turn. Don't make child who is playing with toy to share. Once child puts down toy and is done it can be someone else's turn. Or ask child to please give toy to friend when done. Or if a multi player game play with them to show how to take turns for such game
- Help with potty training without shaming
- I live in Barnardsville which is on the outskirts of Buncombe county and it is extremely hard to find quality childcare without having to drive at least thirty minutes to get there.
- Safe outdoor play space
- I am working to open a small, at-home daycare in the next two years. I am interested in learning the needs of the community and the best practices of owning an at home daycare
- Quality child care, that is affordable where I feel like my child is safe and loved and getting a well rounded education.
- In order to have good quality, childhood education, you're gonna have to pay teachers a good wage
- Childcare providers who genuinely care about my kid, and support her (including being able to discipline/correct without using shame or fear as core motivators).

- For us it was about finding a place we trusted, well-regarded in the community, with decent hours and a decent price. We couldn't afford to be picky, though - in the end we only had ONE option, and it's only for half-day care, despite getting on tons of waitlists early in pregnancy. We have not been offered a spot at any other location, and my son is 16 months old.
- Screening/background checks/vetting/accountability of childcare workers, health/sanitation protocols to minimize exposure to pathogens/viruses, flexibility of drop-offs and pick-ups.
- More opportunities for neurodivergent children to be cared for with respect by individuals who are trained to at the very least not see neurodiverse kids as 'bad'. Sensory smart environments.
- Experience level of staff and their ability to respond to difficult needs of children. We left a facility that couldn't even properly handle when my child said no to putting on a jacket for them to go outside in 40 degree weather. Rather than work through it, they would send her outside for hours without a jacket.
- I want to make sure that we have teachers and administrators that care about each child differently. Not every child fits into a "normal" box and I want to make sure that we have a trained and empathetic provider.
- A safe environment and caring teachers
- Mainly feeling safe and trusting the folks I leave my child with.
- Diversity in the classroom
- I like to see the staff being treated well by the administration, as if they are respected as professionals. If the administration do not treat staff well, turnover is likely to be high and the overall environment of the center is chaotic.
- Knowing that my son is safe and feels comfortable with the people he lives with.
- Classroom setup should feel academic; love that about nbhs. Also warmth and transparency from teachers, which are an A+ at nbhs.
- Trusting the staff/teachers that work with my child.
- tenure of teachers, how long have teachers had experience working with children
- Your current program at the high schools is incredible and so impactful. The cost is affordable, the hours are solid. My son is at NBHS and has loved his teachers and interns. We are so fortunate to have him there.
- A place my child feels challenged with structured activities.
- Safety, cleanliness, care and compassion.
- Communication between daycare staff and childrens' parents is a great thing to have. Our child goes to an incredible daycare, but there are not many (or any) events that are solely to engage with the parents.

- There is not enough child care to even be picky in this area. Daycare waiting lists are so long that you can't even get called back to put your name on them when you're expecting. The only way to get into a daycare here is to have a kid, take care of them yourselves until they get off the waiting list at 2+ years old, and then have a second kid be prioritized due to the first kid in daycare.
- Mostly just wish there were options for young children.
- Good teachers, availability, quality spaces. Year round availability
- Cleanliness, required vaccination, safe and nurturing environment. Buncombe county, dhhs support with the licensure process rather than creating more challenges and hang ups with childcare. Help childcare centers rather than hinder care for families and educators.
- Affordability
- Ability to meet individualized needs
- Access to evaluation services for development.
- Diverse student and teacher population, with inclusivity and celebration of differences.
- Outdoor access, frequent outdoor play in rain, snow, and sun
- Safety measures so that my child is picked up by only those permitted by both parents. School Security and thorough vetting of men who work with children.
- That my child enjoys, going to school every day
- More grants and support for licensed home-based child care programs in Buncombe County. This is where 0-3's thrive, but there are only 3 in Buncombe County! Parents prefer home-based for 0-3s. I understand the importance of pre-school, but I feel much more attention needs to be paid to infants and toddlers. That's where learning starts.
- Mainly affordability and accessibility. The waitlists and costs in this town are absurd and the current turnover rate for early education teachers is very high. Consistency with staffing would be great as well.
- Affordability
- these are good
- Availability and accessibility
- There are not many options, people are not compensated well in that field, and I’m hoping for more investment in it
- Teacher student ratios, communication with parents, well trained educators
- Diversity of the families and children (economic, racial, etc.)
- Staffing
- Teachers who are educated in childcare development and that feel supported and happy with their center and administrative staff. Teacher retention.

- Facility cleanliness and security. Education and experience of teachers/staff
- To have it at all and it be dependable so we can work and make money to feed and take care of our family. It's very stressful to find daycare in this region. This issue has been a huge issue in our lives since having our first child in 2020. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. Us young families and struggling partly because of this. Our parents still have to work (the grandparents) so we have no village to help us like in the 90s when I was a child.
- I would prefer that my son have zero screen time during childcare.
- Safety reliability
- "Affordability #1
- Consistent staff to allow rooms to remain open more often than closed. "
- Hours that consider the normal working hours of a parent + the commute time to live/work around the asheville area.
- These mostly cover it, but it also depends on the age. My kid's only 2.
- That my child is taking care of but also if my child isn't there then I shouldn't be charged for a service the daycare center is not providing at the time me as well as other parents are struggling hard enough without daycare providers getting rich while working parents are struggling bad enoughan shame on the state an federal government for allowing this type fraudulent activities to happen
- A loving caring place where kids can be kids an have fun an adventure together
- It's important to know my kids are safe, loved and educated while they are growing
- Our top priority is safety
- Trustworthy staff
- Attitude seriousness food environment, well everything connected with child care
- that my child feels loved and cared for when I am not there.
- A school community where my family is seen and belongs.
- Solid communication with anything regarding my child's well being. Staying informed of any facility changes such as classroom movement and teacher changes.
- Finding a place where my child looks forward to going
- My kid has a great opportunity to improve his english
- Caring and supportive staff. Learning through play. Outdoor play.
- Community, good pay and support for staff.
- Non religious options
- I feel like the problem is Buncombe County has fallen short to support the daycare centers that are already here
- Structure and boundaries with consistency.
- Ensuring childcare workers are well paid while also being able to afford childcare

- Condition of the space and pickup and drop off times. We are seriously lacking any options for people who work 3-11pm or Saturday and Sunday. There are no formal places with weekend options
- The burden of the mental load on American mothers cannot be overstated. A mother's mental health greatly impacts a child's mental health. Parents need breaks to do revolutionary things like shower alone or go to an OBGYN appointment without a toddler in tow, or—gasp!—rest. In our society, paid childcare is a huge part of the village. We struggle collectively without it.

What barriers do you face as a parent in asking for help or engaging with services?

- Our society is not set up for supporting families
- Knowing where to look
- Finding age appropriate information that my child seems to enjoy
- Time is my biggest barrier. It's hard to fit it in around everything else. I also find that location is a barrier. If it was close to home/in my community or in a remote capacity, I would be more likely to participate or seek out support.
- Time! Working full-time means I get less than 3 hours with my baby each day where she isn't sleeping or at school. Those hours are precious to us and I won't be doing anything else during that time.
- I don't always know where to start.
- Cost, timing of events, ability to get childcare during event.
- Language development
- Time - 2 working parents means that our available time to go to classes or support groups or etc. is very limited. Could potentially do so in person if childcare and food (at least for our kid) was provided. Online sessions are tough to focus on after a full day of work and with a kid running around.
- Awareness and time
- Finding the time to pursue additional services.
- I am limited by time and schedule. I work full-time and cannot attend many child-centered gatherings in the community because I work Tuesdays-Saturdays.
- False assumptions made by staff
- None
- High cost of services.
- There are not enough hours in the day
- primarily the language
- Time constraints
- Time constraints due to working full-time.
- None

- Time
- Communication with other parents
- Mostly, free time. Especially when it comes to services.
- Most in-person things seem to be scheduled around stay-at-home moms. It is so hard to find resources that work around hours of a normal office job
- I don't know where to start
- Lack of services and judgements are common
- Opportunities aren’t offered after working hours or on weekends
- Access, pricing, knowing where to look
- There is not enough time beyond work to actually figure out and engage with additional services.
- Na
- So many services, groups, and classes are only available during working hours.
- Community partners websites not updated, best resources hidden from search engines, case workers are not aware of resources or accurate in approving families for needed resources.
- Time
- I do not know where to look. It is easier to just ask another parent for advice than to try and find a local service.
- Knowing where to look
- Transportation and cost.
- Cost or hours of operation
- Being a single parent and having children in two different locations.
- The time and ease of doing so - must be a low barrier to entry/convenient.
- Fear of being judged
- Unsure where to look beyond Facebook groups and Reddit.
- Childcare availability and convienence of timing
- The time to do so
- None.
- Having the time in my day
- Time and location. We live in north Weaverville and most opportunities for kids as young as mine are in South Asheville/Arden.
- Don’t know where to look. Events don’t fit my schedule.
- Keep getting told they're no funds or everyoneis short staffed
- Don’t know the area and options
- Cost and time
- None

- Time and availability to attend. Most classes or groups happen during times I have no child care or on late evenings that conflict with kids schedules.
- Time
- Time to engage
- The cost and availability are my biggest barriers
- I don’t. My wife’s the language
- Time and availability
- Time
- The availability
- We make too much money on paper to qualify for any services I know of, but with this economy still struggle to pay fully for daycare, insurance, etc.
- Not knowing where to go, what questions to ask and not having the budget to pay for the help.
- Not knowing who to ask
- Time, many parent/child focused services or groups are at times that don't work for working parents
- Time
- Limits on my time, money, and bandwidth as the primary caregiver of my young child.

What else is important to you regarding parenting support?

- Things that my child specifically has enjoyed or excelled in. Knowing what they’re struggling with compared to other children
- N/A
- For kiddos under 5, when childcare is closed or cancelled for inclement weather I am unable to work. Sometimes I can find help with childcare but it's not dependable. If there was some sort of program for this, it would be beneficial.
- Nothing
- N/A
- Do not need any
- Respecting different cultures/values/expectations of families
- I enjoy the socialization of it and would like a peer group to grow with as my child goes through the school system
- Hours for child activities on the weekends. Most enrichment classes are during the week/day for young children.
- N/A
- Giving each other (as in other parents and ourselves) grace

- Knowing where to find resources. Online is an overwhelming place and it can be tough to know where to look. Having all events, resources, or forums outlined in a newsletter or one reliable website would be amazing.
- We are more in need of services to help watch our child than support in parenting technique, but it still would be helpful.
- Community
- Like a lot of first-time parents, I do not know what is "normal" in childhood development, and I wish that there had been more information about what is "allowed" to be worked through in daycare versus when students will be put on an improvement plan and ultimately removed from daycare when we began.
- Please assist daycares in getting licensed. Fewer barriers and more assist with licensing daycares as this helps parents be able to return to work in the community and support their families
- Accurate up to date info
- Summer camp availability
- convenience and not taking up more time
- Support for single parents (parents nights out that are more than 2 hours and affordable, activities that can engage children of multiple ages, network building)
- Access to lists of vetted babysitters, would be extremely helpful!
- Safe environment
- Ensuring that the information given is accessible to a variety of literacy levels
- Nothing to comment
- Whatever that can help my kid is great
- Diverse perspectives
- Connecting with other parents.
- Non judgmental resources, also help navigating having a multicultural and bi racial child in Buncombe county and the challenges they will face.
- Affordable aftercare options for half-day preschool programs. Already concerned about how I will manage working when my child starts a half-day preschool program with no aftercare services this fall. Private childcare providers often charge the same hourly rate that I make, or more, which further complicates things. Also wraparound services—I wish there was a food market at my child's school at pick-up time. I wish the basic need closet (there's one on the campus of my child's current school) had opportunities for parents to both volunteer and receive donations correlated to drop off and pick up times. I wish a food truck would offer free coffee/breakfast/lunch/ice cream sandwiches to families in the parking lot on a recurring basis. I wish our libraries had more varied time and location options for toddler storytimes—I'm often working when they're offered. I wish there was a

partially subsidized housing development just for single moms and their kids with communal resources and support—a built-in village.

DISCLAIMERS

Parts of this analysis were assisted by Microsoft Copilot, an AI tool that helped synthesize and summarize content. All findings, interpretations, and conclusions were reviewed and finalized by the project team.

Participant comments were included as written to the largest extent possible. Some proper names have been removed so as not to identify any individuals or specific organizations.