Potential Funding Priority: Buncombe Pre-K

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DRAFT Investment Scope as of 10/28/26

General Description

The North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten program (NC Pre-K) was designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children.

Buncombe Pre-K aims to increase the effectiveness of the NC Pre-K program in Buncombe County by providing adequate funding to cover the cost of care and layering local program standards and tailored supports with state requirements.

Program History

This is proposed as a continuation of a program that has been funded since FY2023.

Local momentum for pre-k expansion was galvanized by a report from Asheville-Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative, published in August 2017 called, "The Key to Our Futures: Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool in Asheville and Buncombe County."

In January 2021, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners charged the Early Childhood Committee with developing recommendations by June 2021 for increasing access to quality pre-kindergarten (including exploring the goal of achieving universal pre-k in Buncombe County). An ad hoc sub-group of the committee worked over the next several months to review data, research models, and analyze options. The recommendation of the group was to invest county resources to enhance the local implementation of the state's NC Pre-K program – rather than to establish a new pre-k model for Buncombe County.

The County then contracted with Buncombe Partnership for Children (BPFC) to work with the local preschool planning collaborative to develop a NC Pre-K expansion model. BPFC conducted community engagement, research, and analysis and designed a program including cost estimates and implementation considerations.

The research culminated in a December 2021 report called, "Building Capacity in Buncombe County to Expand NC Pre-K Availability & Accessibility." The model was presented to the Early Childhood Committee in January 2022, and the committee recommended that the Board of Commissioners fund it as a pilot initiative.

BPFC was awarded a 2-year grant from County-directed federal funding (American Rescue Plan Act/State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds) to implement the NC Pre-K expansion program from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2024.

After the pilot funding expired, the Early Childhood Committee continued funding this project as a County-funded grant within its Early Childhood Fund recommendations for FY2025, FY2026 and FY2027.

The program is now in its fifth year. This investment would be intended to sustain program quality and success as evidenced by:

- **Participation**: Enrollment in NC Pre-K Slots at or above 97% each year except for 2024-25 and 2025-26 when enrollment was at 86% and 88% respectively as a result of impacts from Tropical Storm Helene. Prior to the start of Buncombe Pre-K, enrollment averaged under 75%. Not being able to staff classrooms was a primary driver for under-enrollment.
- **Stability**: Lead teacher retention is strong. The percent of NC Pre-K lead teachers maintained is at 82% in the most recent data, in comparison to 51.9% the two years pre-COVID prior to the start of Buncombe Pre-K.
- **Family Access:** More private sites means more enrollment from families that may not qualify for other public programs, etc.

(See Appendix: Investments and Impacts, FY2023-FY2027)

Program Design

Strategic Framework

NC Pre-K Overview

NC Pre-K is designed to provide free high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-old children.

NC Pre-K is administered at the state level by the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. A local committee provides programmatic, fiscal, and operational oversight. The program is state and federally funded. The source of federal pass-through funds is grants such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and occasional special federal allocations.

The program is offered at no cost to families for 6 ½ hours a day for 10 months (school-day, school-year) in various settings including public school classrooms, private child care centers and Head Start programs. Private centers include nonprofit organizations and for-profit companies who operate NC Pre-K classrooms.

Eligibility:

- Children must be four years old on or before August 31st of the program year.
- Family gross income must be at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI).
- Children of certain military families are also eligible without regard to income.
- Up to 20% of age-eligible children enrolled may have family incomes in excess of 75% SMI if they have documented risk factors in specific categories

including developmental disability, Limited English Proficiency, educational need, or chronic health condition.

NC Pre-K Program Requirements (2026-2027):

- Child Care Rules: Facilities must comply fully with North Carolina child care rules and regulations.
- Star Ratings: Classrooms operate in public schools, Head Start programs, or licensed private centers holding high star ratings (4 or 5 stars).
- Health and Safety: Sites must maintain completed medical, dental, and developmental screening records for enrolled children.
- Nutrition: NC Pre-K sites must provide breakfast or a morning snack and lunch that meets specific nutritional guidelines.
- Staff-to-Child Ratios: The classroom shall not exceed a maximum staff-to-child ratio of one to 10 with a maximum class size of 20 children, with at least one teacher and one teacher assistant per classroom.
- Staff & Teacher Qualifications: Lead teachers must hold or be actively working toward a North Carolina Birth-through-Kindergarten (B-K) or Preschool Add-on Standard Professional II license, which requires a minimum of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree from an accredited college or university. Assistant teachers must have an AA in Early Childhood Education. Program Directors must obtain Level III Admin.
- Educational Standards: Programs must implement an approved, evidence-based curricula aligned with the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development.
- Formative Assessments: Teachers must conduct ongoing formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development.
- Family Engagement: Classrooms must provide meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education.

These standards are higher than general NC child care licensure requirements/Child Care Subsidy requirements. For example:

- Staff-to-child ratios for licensure are 1:20 for four- to five-year-olds compared with 1:10 for NC Pre-K.
- Lead teacher education requirements for licensure are high school diploma/GED and North Carolina Early Childhood Credential (EDU119 or equivalent) compared with a bachelors required to qualify to be a licensed NC Pre-K lead teacher.
- Licensed programs required to ensure that children receive meals and snacks but may require that parents bring/pay for the food, whereas NC Pre-K sites must provide meals and snacks and may not charge fees.

The NC Pre-K program requirements result in a service delivery model that is expensive to provide. The NC Pre-K reimbursement rates for providers not only are insufficient to cover the cost of service delivery, the rates also lag significantly behind Child Care Subsidy rates.

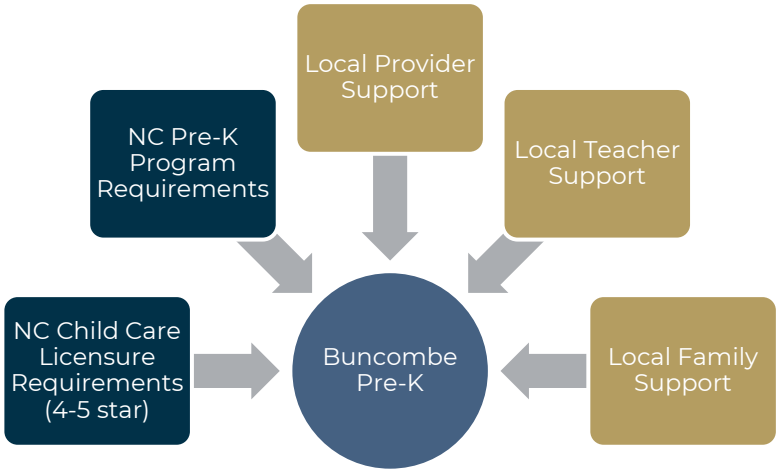
Comparison of NC Pre-K rates with Child Care Subsidy Rates		
NC Pre-K Rates (FY2027)	**Subsidy Rates** for Centers (FY2027 prior to reimbursement rate floor)	**Subsidy Rates** for Centers (As of 10/1/26)
Private Providers: $758 Public Schools: $535 Head Starts: $459	5-star, 3–5-year-old: $775 4-star, 3–5-year-old: $747 3-star, 3–5-year-old: $730	5-star, 3–5-year-old: $1,213 4-star, 3–5-year-old: $1,075 3-star, 3–5-year-old: $935

Notes:

- All rates are shown per slot, per month.
- NC Pre-K rates are graduated based on provider type.
- Child Care Subsidy rates are graduated based on centers vs. homes, star rating and child age.
- Local Smart Start funding can be used to enhance Child Care Subsidy rates for 4-star and 5-star providers. In FY2027, for 3–5-year-olds, Smart Start subsidy enhancements are $165 per month per child for 5-star providers and $115 per month per child for 4-star providers. This enhancement fluctuates based on available funds and current needs and is not reflected in the table above.
- Family fees for Child Care Subsidy equivalent to 10% of gross monthly income are deducted from monthly reimbursement rates and paid separately by families to providers.

Buncombe Pre-K Overview

Buncombe Pre-K aims to increase the effectiveness of the NC Pre-K program in Buncombe County by providing adequate funding to cover the cost of care and layering local program standards and tailored supports with state requirements.



Service Delivery Model

NC Pre-K is a state program, operated through the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

Community-level policy and oversight is provided by Local NC Pre-K Committees. In Buncombe County, the group is referred to as the "NC Pre-K Advisory Committee." It is comprised of representatives from the child care community as well as parent(s) of preschool-age children.

The NC Pre-K Advisory Committee is responsible for selecting an entity to administer the program. This must be affirmed annually and can be a public school system, Head Start, or local Smart Start.

Buncombe Partnership for Children (BPFC) is the local Smart Start and current administrator of the NC Pre-K program as well as the local supplementary program, Buncombe Pre-K.

Services

Local Program Standards & Tailored Supports

Provider Support	Teacher Support	Family Support
• **Slot Rate Enhancements** • Augmented Data Collection	• **Teacher Pay Supplements** • Professional Learning Community	• **Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment** • Wraparound Care & Transportation

Provider Support: Slot Rate Enhancements
County funding is used to supplement the state reimbursement rate and help meet the true cost of care.

The basis for slot rate enhancements rests on an estimated true cost to deliver a slot within the program. After a review of research, such as a 2017 Study of Costs and Effectiveness Associated with NC Pre-K Slots commissioned by the NC Legislature, the NC Pre-K Advisory Committee determined to use $990 per child per month, which was later adjusted by 3.5% to $1,025.

The formula for determining the amount of slot rate enhancements is $1,025 minus the state NC Pre-K rate minus any other public funding received for the slot. No supplement is provided if the combined total exceeds $1,025.

FY2027 Slot Rate Enhancements (per slot, per month)
- Private: $277
- Public School: $218.25
- Public School + Head Start: $158
- Head Start: $0
- Developmental Day: $0

NC Pre-K rates and local Slot Rate Enhancements are determined based on the assumption that public schools and Head Starts have access to other sources of public funds that can be used to support the program.

Public Schools may contribute Title I funds to support the NC Pre-K program. Currently, with competing needs, Asheville City Schools does not allocate any Title I funding to support NC Pre-K.

Head Start received a slot rate enhancement of $45.30 in FY2023 and $174.50 in FY2024. Head Start enhancements were eliminated when the program moved from Federal funds into County general funds based on limited budget and Head Start's perceived ability to access other public funds.

(See Appendix: Budget/Cost Estimates)

Provider Support: Augmented Data Collection
Buncombe Pre-K includes local data collection more specific than NC Pre-K Program Requirements, including:

- Use of a BRIGANCE Screener, a standardized developmental screening tool to evaluate school readiness and detect potential learning differences.
- Increased frequency of Teaching Strategies GOLD Formative Assessment Checkpoints for more complete data on whole-child growth. NC Pre-K requires 1 annually; Buncombe Pre-K requires 2 in order to have beginning-of-year and end-of-year comparative data.

Teacher Support: Teacher Pay Supplements
County funding is used for pay supplements for NC Pre-K teachers to compensate them more adequately.

The basis for teacher pay supplements is pay parity with the K-12 system. When Buncombe Pre-K first launched in FY2023, the NC Pre-K Advisory Committee approved a salary scale that was created based on a hybrid of Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools teacher pay. In the years since, public school teacher pay rates have seen increases, but Buncombe Pre-K hasn't had the financial capacity to grow at the same rate. As of FY2027, the Buncombe Pre-K teacher salary scale is no longer on parity with public school.

The formula for determining the amount of teacher pay supplement is based on a salary scale, graduated based on the number of years on the teacher's license.

County funds are used to pay the amount over $41,000, which was the base pay for 0 years on license on the NC Department of Public Instruction in 2025-2026.

Sample of FY2027 Salary Scale & Teacher Pay Supplements

Years on License	Buncombe Pre-K Pay Scale	Annual Supplement Amount
0	$41,250.00	$0
5	$46,924.50	$5,674.50
10	$52,588.50	$11,638.50
20+	$63,609.00	$22,359.00

Teacher pay supplements are currently only issued to private providers. Head Start was included in FY2025 at the time when their Slot Rate Enhancement was eliminated, based on input from a subgroup of the Early Childhood Committee. After one year, partial grant awards caused further budget constraints, and Head Start's teacher pay supplements were discontinued.

Teacher pay supplements are paid directly to the providers (employers), with funds restricted to be used only for salary. BPFC conducts employment and wage verification to confirm funds are being used correctly and that teachers are paid according to the salary scale.

(See Appendix: Budget/Cost Estimates)

Teacher Support: Professional Learning Community (PLC)
BPFC coordinates a PLC for Buncombe Pre-K teachers. PLCs are groups of educators who meet regularly to collaborate, receive support and accountability, and enhance educational practices. Buncombe Pre-K's PLC meets monthly. There is also a summer pre-service 1-2 day event for teachers before the start of the program year. This activity is supported by the Program Support budget category.

Family Support: Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment
Buncombe Pre-K is supported by an application platform where parents can find out if their child is eligible for free pre-k and apply directly for enrollment at any provider or site. The application portal utilizes a software called SchoolMint. BPFC coordinators assist with people with accessing the portal, completing applications, and finding placement options that best meet their needs. As a condition of participating in NC Pre-K, Buncombe Pre-K providers agree to use of the portal, including promoting the portal, helping families apply, and accepting enrollments through the platform. The Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment strategy also includes community advertising and recruitment to increase awareness about Buncombe Pre-K. This activity is supported by the Program Support budget category.

Family Support: Wraparound Care & Transportation Support
Because NC Pre-K follows a school day-school year schedule, many families require wraparound care. This is a term used to describe before-school, after-school, and

school break/summer care that “wraps around” the conventional school day to support working parents and extend children’s learning. Most NC Pre-K families qualify for Child Care Subsidy, which can provide a way to afford wraparound care. However, some situations occur where there are unmet needs for wraparound care, such as when schedules change but families haven’t been approved yet for Subsidy. In these instances, program funds can be used to provide scholarships. This supports families and provides critical workforce access for parents.

Families also sometimes face barriers related to transportation. Similarly, program funds can be used to provide support in the form of fuel cost or rideshare vouchers. When providers are accessing this support for participants, they must monitor and report attendance to ensure the support is having the intended impact.

Wraparound Care & Transportation Support has remained a program component since the start of the program, however it has not been prioritized for funding as a result of budget constraints. These services are eligible for grant awards from other area funders, so County funds have been prioritized for use on Slot Rate Enhancements and Teacher Pay Supplements.

Other Program Standards & Tailored Supports

When Buncombe Pre-K first launched in FY2023, the program also included components for workforce development and provider development. Since that time, both elements have been removed from the program. The workforce development work entailed recruitment, development and retention support for NC Pre-K lead teachers. This work is so similar to BPFC’s Workforce Development program that it was determined that there is not a need to also include it in Buncombe Pre-K. The provider development work entailed a ramp-up program to help new providers and sites successfully join the NC Pre-K program. However there has not been overall growth in the program in regard to the state allocating more slots to Buncombe County, so this program element was discontinued.

Evaluation & Data Collection

Intended Outcomes

The Buncombe Pre-K investment is intended to sustain program quality and prepare children for success in kindergarten, with priority on those with the greatest needs. Having a thriving NC Pre-K program in Buncombe County would equip the program for successful growth if/when the state provides additional funded slots.

System-Level Measures

The initiative should directly contribute to communitywide measures, including:

- Number of educators working in licensed early childhood settings.
- Number of licensed child care slots for children ages 0-5.

- Number of 4 & 5-star rated licensed child care slots for children ages 0-5.
- Number of children ages 0-5 enrolled in licensed child care.
- Number of children ages 0-5 enrolled in 4&5-star rated licensed child care.
- Percent of total child population ages 0-5 enrolled in licensed care.
- Range and median compensation for early educators.
- Percent of children meeting or exceeding kindergarten readiness expectations at kindergarten entry
- Percent of children at or above kindergarten literacy benchmark at beginning and end of year

NOTE: Access to consistent, reliable, county-level data sources is critical to establishing metrics that can be monitored longitudinally. See Workforce scope for information about data needs.

Program-Level Measures

If funded, the vendor would be required to report on measures including:

- Number of allocated NC Pre-K Slots
- Number of enrolled children
- Enrollment percentage (percent of approved NC Pre-K slots that are filled)
- Number of participating NC Pre-K Providers
- Number of participating NC Pre-K Sites
- Number of enrolled slots by provider and provider type
- Number of NC Pre-K lead teachers
- Lead teacher retention
- Child demographics (e.g. zip code, language, gender, race/ethnicity, family income, IEP status, developmental need, chronic health status)
- Child developmental milestones (e.g. Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment results)

Funding

Annual Investment Range

Buncombe Pre-K investments could entail an estimated investment range of approximately $1,190,000 to $1,950,000 annually. Three example levels are provided and can be scaled to match a different available budget amount if necessary.

Cost Considerations & Assumptions

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Slots: $773,310 Pay: $294,982 Admin: $125,000 **Total: $1,193,292**	Slots: $1,100,810 Pay: $354,455.81 Admin: $125,000 **Total: $1,580,265.81**	Slots: $1,354,534 Pay: $474,890 Admin: $125,000 **Total: $1,954,424**

-Maintains FY2027 slot rate enhancement rates for Private Sites and Public School and includes $100 per slot for Head Start. - Maintains FY2027 teacher pay supplement rates and includes Head Start.	-Increases all FY2027 slot rate enhancements by $100 and includes $150 for Head Start -Increases salary scale by 5% for all licensure levels (up to pay parity amount) and includes Head Start.	-Increases slot rate enhancement benchmark by 68% (the amount needed to get Private Site slots from $1,025 to $1,213) and includes $200 enhancement for Head Start. -Provides pay parity with Buncombe County Schools salary scale and includes Head Start.
Program Support		
Total: Not to Exceed $125,000 or 10% of Total Program Cost To cover the following costs to implement the program: • Personnel • Contracted services (e.g. interpretation/translation) • Office Supplies • Travel • Communication & Postage • Printing & Binding • Repair & Maintenance • Program Supplies • Outreach & Advertising • Office Rent • Equipment Rental • Technology & Software		

Estimates are based on currently available FY2027 service levels, rates, and cost information.

The combined total monthly Slot Rate Enhancement and Teacher Pay Supplement for private providers for the Medium budget scenario would range from $406 to $539 with an average of $467. Combined with the $758 NC Pre-K monthly rate, private providers would be receiving an average of $1,225. (See Appendix: Budget/Cost Estimates)

Implementation

Contract Considerations

Buncombe County will need to contract with a third-party vendor to administer the Buncombe Pre-K program. The service contract would include terms and conditions for use of funds, a scope of work, performance measures and reporting expectations.

In accordance with the procurement policy and procedures, when spending local funds for the purchase of services, formal bidding is required for awards of $90,000 or greater. In the rare event there is only one supplier capable of providing a particular service, competitive bidding may be waived via a Sole Source process. In this instance, only the NC Pre-K Administrator (as designated by the NC Pre-K Advisory Committee) can effectively administer the Buncombe Pre-K program.

As a condition of the contract, Buncombe County will define decision-making authorities relating to program design and budget. The County, either through its staff or Early Childhood Committee, will need to approve all local program criteria, rates and allowable uses of funds.

Multi-Year Award Options

During the engagement phase of this focused investment project, community partners consistently expressed preference for multi-year awards in order to provide stability and enhance impact. Partners communicated a preference for award terms of at least 2 years with a preference for 3-year awards.

A multi-year award would provide stability for NC Pre-K providers who have historically been uncertain each year about whether slot rate enhancements and teacher pay supplements will continue. A multi-year award would also provide stability for the overall program, which is accustomed to responding to annual grant awards and shifting program components each year to fit into available funds.

Investment Considerations

Benefits of Funding This Priority

There is strong, longitudinal evidence base supporting the benefits of high-quality prekindergarten, including specific studies on NC Pre-K. Evaluations by Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute) show that NC Pre-K produces measurable academic, social, and systemic benefits that often persist through elementary and middle school.

Kindergarten readiness is a stated goal in Buncombe County's strategic plan, and pre-kindergarten is specifically identified as a priority in the Early Childhood Committee's enabling charge from County Commission.

NC Pre-K provides high-quality services to children who need it most, including those from very low-income families and those with risk factors such as developmental disabilities, Limited English Proficiency, educational needs, or chronic health conditions.

NC Pre-K is underfunded without local support. State reimbursement rates do not cover the cost of care and lag behind rates for Child Care Subsidy, which has stringent program standards.

Risks/Challenges

Potential risks include:

- Because this is a local supplement to a state program (that also includes federal funding) it is highly dependent on decisions made by lawmakers at other governmental levels.
- If local funding is not continued, it creates a real risk of significant destabilization. Providers have indicated that the state investment alone makes it financially difficult for providers to participate and that they would need to consider withdrawing from the program if the enhancements/supplements were to be discontinued. This would lead to a loss of slots as well as qualified teachers.

The committee can mitigate these risks by:

- Selecting Buncombe Pre-K as a continued funding priority for FY2028 and beyond.
- Advocating with the state of NC to address structural issues within the NC Pre-K program, most significantly the low reimbursement rates in comparison with Child Care Subsidy and in correlation with high program standards.

Community and Committee Support

NC Pre-K Enhancement/Buncombe Pre-K demonstrated substantial support in the committee and community-partner engagement process.

The priority ranked #4 out of 18 priorities in the committee survey, with 76.9% support, 7.7% neutral, and 15.4% in opposition. In the community partner survey, 74% of respondents supported the priority, with 23 of 31 respondents expressing support, and 2 expressing opposition.

Engagement feedback identified that NC Pre-K has high-quality program standards, and that the local enhancement strengthens program quality and stability. Providers indicated that supplemental funding is helpful in recruiting qualified teachers who can provide high-quality instruction and remain in the program, rather than leaving for school system positions that may offer higher pay and stronger benefits.

Appendixes

Investments and Impacts, FY2023-FY2027

Funding Source:	Budgeted	Expended
ARPA Funding (FY23-FY24)	$3,201,546	$3,201,546
FY2025 ECE Grant	$709,432	$535,886*
FY2026 ECE Grant	$709,432	$709,432
FY2027 ECE Grant	$792,404	TBD
TOTAL	**$5,412,814**	
AVERAGE	**$1,082,562**	

**FY2025 expended was low as a result of FY2024 carry-forward.*

Buncombe Pre-K Program Data

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Number of NC Pre-K slots maintained	441	433	427	427	422
Average enrollment in NC Pre-K slots	94%	97%	86%	88%	97%
Percent of Lead NC Pre-K teachers maintained	90%	79%	70%	82%	TBD
Number of teachers participating in higher education supports	26	29	30	35	N/A
Number of child applications submitted through Buncombe Pre-K	633	662	705	605	686
Number of new NC Pre-K providers	2	2	0	0	0
Total number of NC Pre-K providers	8	9	8	8	8
Total number of NC Pre-K classrooms	39	43	41	38	37
Total overall number of NC Pre-K sites	31	32	29	29	28
Number of teachers receiving supplement	8	9	11	11	10

Note: Reductions in slots are the result of allocating more slots to private child care settings versus dually enrolled Head Start slots. It costs more to fund a slot in private child care settings due to differing slot rates. The overall direct service funding from North Carolina to Buncombe County has not been reduced.

Slots by Type

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Private Site	153	164	174	174	181
Public Schools	73	74	67	67	66
Head Start	215	195	186	186	175
Total Number of NC Pre-K slots	441	433	427	427	422

Percent of Students Meeting/Exceeding Expectations, Teaching Strategies GOLD

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Social Emotional - Fall	44%	44%	50%	48%	N/A
Social Emotional - Spring	85%	83%	85%	88%	N/A
Physical - Fall	62%	64%	64%	60%	N/A
Physical - Spring	91%	90%	87%	93%	N/A
Language - Fall	59%	55%	59%	57%	N/A
Language - Spring	86%	84%	80%	88%	N/A
Cognitive - Fall	48%	49%	57%	48%	N/A
Cognitive - Spring	88%	86%	79%	90%	N/A
Literacy - Fall	42%	44%	48%	46%	N/A
Literacy - Spring	87%	86%	81%	88%	N/A
Mathematics - Fall	35%	30%	33%	39%	N/A
Mathematics - Spring	80%	76%	72%	85%	N/A

Note: The percentage meeting or exceeding expectations represents the proportion of assessed children demonstrating age-appropriate skills in each developmental domain at that point in the school year, based on Teaching Strategies GOLD Widely Held Expectations. Fall assessment data is typically collected in October (in FY25 it was collected in December due to Helene), and Spring data is collected in May. FY25 results may reflect the significant disruptions to early learning caused by Helene, where many children experienced months away from the classroom. Strong FY26 outcomes demonstrate encouraging progress in child development and reflect the resilience of the early childhood education community. FY27 data is not yet available. These results include children with individualized education plans (IEPs) to represent the full scope of children in the program.

NC Pre-K Eligibility, in Comparison with Subsidy & Head Start

	NC Pre-K	Subsidy	Head Start
Family of 2	$58,009	$43,280	$21,640
Family of 3	$71,659	$54,640	$27,320
Family of 4	$85,308	$66,000	$33,000
Family of 5	$98,957	$77,360	$38,680
Family of 6	$112,607	$88,720	$44,360

Budget/Cost Estimates

NC Pre-K Rates

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Private Site	$728	$728	$728	$728	$758
Public Schools	$530	$530	$530	$530	$535
Head Start	$400	$420	$420	$420	$459

Buncombe Pre-K Slot Rate Enhancements

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Private Site	varied	$297	$297	$255.45	$277
Public Schools/Head Start	$192.70	$218.25	$160	$118.45	$158
Public Schools	$192.70	$218.25	$218.25	$187.70	$218.25
Head Start	$45.30	$174.50	$0	$0	$0

Combined NC Pre-K + Buncombe Pre-K Rates

	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27
Private Site	Varies	$1025	$1025	$983.45	$1035
Public Schools/Head Start	$722.70	$748.25	$690	$648.45	$693
Public Schools	$722.70	$748.25	$748.25	$717.70	$753.25
Head Start	$445.30	$594.50	$420	$420	$459

FY2027 NC Pre-K rates and Slot Rate Enhancements

Provider Type	NC Pre-K Monthly Rate	Buncombe Pre-K Slot Rate Enhancement	Number of Slots	Estimated Annual Supplement Cost
Private	$758	$277	174	$578,376
Public School	$535	$218.25	20	$52,380
Public School/Head Start	$535	$158	46	$87,216
Head Start	$459	$0	175	$0
Developmental Day	$758	$0	7	$0
			422	$717,972

FY2027 Salary Scale and Teacher Pay Supplement Amounts, compared to Public School

Years on License	NC Department of Instruction State Rate	Buncombe County Schools Local Supplement	Buncombe Pre-K Salary Scale	Buncombe Pre-K Teacher Pay Supplement	Number of Teachers Receiving Supplement	Estimated Annual Cost
0	$41,000.00	$45,305.00	$41,250.00	$0.00	0	$0.00
1	$41,750.00	$46,342.50	$42,346.50	$1,096.50	2	$2,193.00
2	$42,500.00	$47,175.00	$43,491.00	$2,241.00	1	$2,241.00
3	$43,250.00	$48,007.50	$44,635.50	$3,385.50	1	$3,385.50
4	$44,000.00	$48,840.00	$45,780.00	$4,530.00	0	$0.00
5	$44,750.00	$49,896.25	$46,924.50	$5,674.50	1	$5,674.50
6	$45,720.00	$50,977.80	$48,289.50	$7,039.50	0	$0.00
7	$46,630.00	$51,992.45	$49,439.25	$8,189.25	0	$0.00

8	$47,530.00	$52,995.95	$50,589.00	$9,339.00	1	$9,339.00
9	$48,440.00	$54,010.60	$51,738.75	$10,488.75	0	$0.00
10	$49,350.00	$55,518.75	$52,888.50	$11,638.50	1	$11,638.50
11	$50,250.00	$56,531.25	$54,531.75	$13,281.75	0	$0.00
12	$51,160.00	$57,555.00	$55,692.00	$14,442.00	0	$0.00
13	$52,060.00	$58,567.50	$56,852.25	$15,602.25	1	$15,602.25
14	$52,970.00	$59,591.25	$58,012.50	$16,762.50	0	$0.00
15	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$59,172.75	$17,922.75	0	$0.00
16	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$60,879.00	$19,629.00	1	$19,629.00
17	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$60,879.00	$19,629.00	0	$0.00
18	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$60,879.00	$19,629.00	0	$0.00
19	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$60,879.00	$19,629.00	0	$0.00
20-22	$53,880.00	$61,153.80	$60,879.00	$19,629.00	0	$0.00
23+	$53,880.00	$61,692.60	$63,609.00	$22,359.00	2	$44,718.00
					11	$114,420.75

*Salary is based on a 10-month calendar.

Slot Rate Enhancements: LOW Budget Scenario

Provider Type	NC Pre-K Monthly Rate	Buncombe Pre-K Slot Rate Enhancement	Number of Slots	Estimated Annual Cost
Private	$758	$277	174	$481,980
Public School	$535	$218	20	$43,650
Public School/ Head Start	$535	$158	46	$72,680
Head Start	$459	$100	175	$175,000
Developmental Day	$758		7	$0
			422	$773,310

Slot Rate Enhancements: MEDIUM Budget Scenario

Provider Type	NC Pre-K Monthly Rate	Buncombe Pre-K Slot Rate Enhancement	Number of Slots	Estimated Annual Cost
Private	$758	$377	174	$655,980
Public School	$535	$318	20	$63,650
Public School/ Head Start	$535	$258	46	$118,680
Head Start	$459	$150	175	$262,500
Developmental Day	$758		7	$0
			422	$1,100,810

Slot Rate Enhancements: HIGH Budget Scenario

Provider Type	NC Pre-K Monthly Rate	Buncombe Pre-K Slot Rate Enhancement	Number of Slots	Estimated Annual Cost
Private	$758	$465	174	$809,100
Public School	$535	$367	20	$73,332
Public School/ Head Start	$535	$265	46	$122,102
Head Start	$459	$200	175	$350,000
Developmental Day	$758		7	$0
			$422	$1,354,534

Teacher Pay Supplements: LOW Budget Scenario

Years on License	Buncombe Pre-K Salary Scale	Number of Teachers	Estimated Annual Cost
0	$41,250.00	3	$750.00
1	$42,346.50	5	$6,732.50
2	$43,491.00	0	$0.00
3	$44,635.50	1	$3,635.50
4	$45,780.00	1	$4,780.00
5	$46,924.50	0	$0.00
6	$48,289.50	2	$14,579.00
7	$49,439.25	2	$16,878.50
8	$50,589.00	0	$0.00
9	$51,738.75	1	$10,738.75
10	$52,888.50	0	$0.00
11	$54,531.75	1	$13,531.75
12	$55,692.00	1	$14,692.00
13	$56,852.25	0	$0.00
14	$58,012.50	1	$17,012.50
15	$59,172.75	1	$18,172.75
16	$60,879.00	1	$19,879.00
17	$60,879.00	2	$39,758.00
18	$60,879.00	0	$0.00
19	$60,879.00	1	$19,879.00
20	$64,490.70	0	$0.00
21+	$64,490.70	4	$93,962.80
		27	$294,982.05

Teacher Pay Supplements: MEDIUM Budget Scenario

Years on License	Buncombe Pre-K Salary Scale	Number of Teachers	Estimated Annual Cost
0	$43,312.50	3	$6,937.50
1	$44,463.83	5	$17,319.13
2	$45,665.55	0	$0.00
3	$46,867.28	1	$5,867.28
4	$48,069.00	1	$7,069.00
5	$49,270.73	0	$0.00
6	$50,703.98	2	$19,407.95
7	$51,911.21	2	$21,822.43
8	$53,118.45	0	$0.00
9	$54,325.69	1	$13,325.69
10	$55,532.93	0	$0.00
11	$57,258.34	1	$16,258.34
12	$58,476.60	1	$17,476.60
13	$59,694.86	0	$0.00
14	$60,913.13	1	$19,913.13
15	$62,131.39	1	$21,131.39
16	$63,922.95	1	$22,922.95
17	$63,922.95	2	$45,845.90
18	$63,922.95	0	$0.00
19	$63,922.95	1	$22,922.95
20	$65,058.90	0	$0.00
21+	$65,058.90	4	$96,235.60
		27	$354,455.81

Teacher Pay Supplements: HIGH Budget Scenario

Years on License	Buncombe Pre-K Salary Scale	Number of Teachers	Estimated Annual Cost
0	$53,040.00	3	$36,120.00
1	$53,316.25	5	$61,581.25
2	$53,592.50	0	$0.00
3	$53,868.75	1	$12,868.75
4	$54,145.00	1	$13,145.00
5	$55,192.50	0	$0.00
6	$55,750.00	2	$29,500.00
7	$56,307.50	2	$30,615.00
8	$56,865.00	0	$0.00
9	$57,422.50	1	$16,422.50
10	$59,782.50	0	$0.00
11	$60,356.25	1	$19,356.25
12	$60,930.00	1	$19,930.00
13	$61,503.75	0	$0.00
14	$62,662.50	1	$21,662.50
15	$64,490.70	1	$23,490.70
16	$64,490.70	1	$23,490.70
17	$64,490.70	2	$46,981.40
18	$64,490.70	0	$0.00
19	$64,490.70	1	$23,490.70
20	$65,058.90	0	$0.00
21+	$65,058.90	4	$96,235.60
		27	$474,890.35

Provider Funding: CURRENT (FY2027)

Provider	**# slots**	**NC Pre-K monthly rate**	**Buncombe Pre-K Total** (includes slot enhancements & teacher supplements)	**Monthly Buncombe Pre-K per slot**	**State + Local Slot Total**
Childcare Network 177	18	$ 758.00	$ 68,032.75	$ 377.96	$ 1,135.96
Christine Avery/St. Marks	30	$ 758.00	$ 131,752.88	$ 439.18	$ 1,197.18
Donald Collins	16	$ 758.00	$ 46,811.00	$ 292.57	$ 1,050.57
Eliada	81	$ 758.00	$ 253,414.50	$ 312.86	$ 1,070.86
Verner East/Central	20	$ 758.00	$ 70,924.00	$ 354.62	$ 1,112.62
YWCA	16	$ 758.00	$ 53,909.00	$ 336.93	$ 1,094.93
Asheville City Schools	66	$ 530.00	$ 116,330.00	$ 176.26	$ 706.26
Community Action	175	$ 449.00	$ -	$ -	$ 449.00

Provider Funding: LOW Budget Scenario

Provider	# slots	NC Pre-K monthly rate	Buncombe Pre-K Total (includes slot enhancements & teacher supplements)	Monthly Buncombe Pre-K per slot	State + Local Slot Total
Childcare Network 177	18	$ 758.00	$ 68,032.75	$ 377.96	$1,135.96
Christine Avery/St. Marks	30	$ 758.00	$ 131,752.88	$ 439.18	$1,197.18
Donald Collins	16	$ 758.00	$ 46,811.00	$ 292.57	$1,050.57
Eliada	81	$ 758.00	$ 253,414.50	$ 312.86	$1,070.86
Verner East/Central	20	$ 758.00	$ 70,924.00	$ 354.62	$1,112.62
YWCA	16	$ 758.00	$ 53,909.00	$ 336.93	$1,094.93
Asheville City Schools	66	$ 530.00	$ 116,330.00	$ 176.26	$ 706.26
Community Action	175	$ 449.00	$ 344,320.15	$ 196.75	$ 645.75

Provider Funding: MEDIUM Budget Scenario

Provider	# slots	NC Pre-K monthly rate	Buncombe Pre-K Total (includes slot enhancements & teacher supplements)	Monthly Buncombe Pre-K per slot	State + Local Slot Total
Childcare Network 177	18	$ 758.00	$ 88,991.39	$ 494.40	$1,252.40
Christine Avery/St. Marks	30	$ 758.00	$161,752.88	$ 539.18	$1,297.18
Donald Collins	16	$ 758.00	$ 64,985.55	$ 406.16	$1,164.16
Eliada	81	$ 758.00	$348,166.73	$ 429.84	$1,187.84
Verner East/Central	20	$ 758.00	$ 95,800.20	$ 479.00	$1,237.00
YWCA	16	$ 758.00	$ 72,438.45	$ 452.74	$1,210.74
Asheville City Schools	66	$ 530.00	$182,330.00	$ 276.26	$ 806.26
Community Action	175	$ 449.00	$465,723.49	$ 266.13	$ 715.13

Provider Funding: HIGH Budget Scenario

Provider	# slots	NC Pre-K monthly rate	Buncombe Pre-K Total (includes slot enhancements & teacher supplements)	Monthly Buncombe Pre-K per slot	State + Local Slot Total
Childcare Network 177	18	$ 758.00	$ 91,351.70	$ 507.51	$1,265.51
Christine Avery/St. Marks	30	$ 758.00	$161,752.88	$ 539.18	$1,297.18
Donald Collins	16	$ 758.00	$ 72,912.50	$ 455.70	$1,213.70
Eliada	81	$ 758.00	$391,765.70	$ 483.66	$1,241.66
Verner East/Central	20	$ 758.00	$107,051.25	$ 535.26	$1,293.26
YWCA	16	$ 758.00	$ 76,185.00	$ 476.16	$1,234.16
Asheville City Schools	66	$ 530.00	$195,434.00	$ 296.11	$ 826.11
Community Action	175	$ 449.00	$620,348.65	$ 354.48	$ 803.48

Supporting Information

Building Capacity in Buncombe County to Expand NC Pre-K Availability & Accessibility: Buncombe Partnership for Children

- Study: https://buncombepfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/bpfc_Report_2021_WEB.pdf
- Year 1 Report https://buncombepfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/bfpc_YearOneReport_FINAL.pdf
- Year 2 Report https://buncombepfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/bfpc_YearTwoReport_Final-short2.pdf

Effects of North Carolina's Pre-Kindergarten Program: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute: https://fpg.unc.edu/publications/effects-north-carolina-pre-kindergarten-program-findings-through-pre-k-small-scale-0

Heckman Curve: https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-curve/

NC Pre-K has School-Wide Benefits: Duke Sanford Center for Child & Family Policy https://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NC-PreK-has-School-Wide-Benefits.pdf

NC Pre-K Program Fact Sheet: UNC School of Government https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/default/files/course_materials/Additional%20Resource%20-%20ncIMPACT%20NC%20Pre-K%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

NC Pre-K: The Carolina Demography Guide https://carolinademography.cpc.unc.edu/2020/07/06/nc-pre-k-the-carolina-demography-guide/

North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements and Guidance: https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/2/2026-2027_NC_PreK_Program_Requirements_and_Guidance_FINAL_Aug2026.pdf?ver=K-27Vq4zlM-2zDFxpHECjg%3d%3d

Perry Preschool Project: https://highscope.org/project/perry-preschool-study/

The Key to Our Futures: Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool in Asheville and Buncombe County https://buncombepfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ABPPC-Report-UPDATED_2017-11-29.pdf

North Carolina Early Childhood Education Funding Streams Overview https://www.commerce.nc.gov/north-carolina-early-childhood-education-funding-streams-overview-afton-partners/open