

**Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
September 26, 2017 Work Session**



Community Panel on Early Childhood Education: Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges:
Things that get in our way of success as a community

- Complex and limited funding – Subsidy, Head Start, NC Pre-K, Smart Start, private donations, fundraising, self-pay
- Lack of adequate, sustainable funding for high quality care
- Limited availability of spaces, both slots and facility needs
- Delivering sustainable, high quality programs for the lowest cost
- Teachers are inadequately compensated
- System has a shortage of highly trained and qualified teachers and staff
- Need a robust pipeline of employees from high school graduates with limited higher education to seasoned professionals with 4-year & graduate degrees
- Managing funding sources and requirements while providing responsive programs that meet the needs of community
- Delicate provider business models - changes such as state funding or enrollment fluctuations can cause imbalance/deficits
- The balance between “Early Childhood Education” and “Childcare” – meeting school readiness and workforce needs
- Not all families can find the kind of care they want (type, location, quality) because of waitlists and cost
- Special needs for children are on the rise, such as opioid impacts
- The need for more public understanding of what high-quality early care and education is and its importance

Opportunities:
Solutions, promising progress, or steps in the right direction

- Studies continue to demonstrate the return on investment for early childhood education, such as findings from the recent longitudinal study by Duke's Center for Child and Family Policy regarding the strong impact of Smart Start and NC Pre-K on North Carolina's children
- Attention and investment at the federal and state levels – such as the Federal re-authorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program , the NC General Assembly's Pre-K expansion and the work to align the NC University and Community College system for a elementary education
- Growing local investments in early childhood education, such as expansion of Headstart for Johnston Elementary School and the new Eliada classroom
- A growing field of professional early childhood educators
- Community collaboration (locally, state and nationally) to prioritize expanding access to early childhood care and education
- Attention to professionalizing the field
- New methods for parent and family engagement
- Broad support for local planning efforts