



New Classroom at Lonnie D. Burton Child Development Center

At the direction of the Board of Commissioners for Buncombe County, we continue to explore strategic partnerships that expand access to quality pre-k by leveraging existing resources.

With support from Buncombe County, a new preschool classroom will open at Lonnie D. Burton Child Development Center located in the Southside neighborhood of Asheville (Livingston Street). The new classroom will be operated by Community Action Opportunities in space provided by the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. It will serve 18 children and families that meet NC Pre-Kindergarten Program (NC Pre-k) requirements. The classroom teachers and environment will also meet the high quality NC Pre-K Program Standards. To qualify for NC Pre-K a child must be four-years old on or before August 31st and the families gross income must be at or below 75% of the State Median Income.

This investment repurposes an existing allocation of funds. Buncombe County's funding of a new preschool classroom at Johnston Elementary School earlier this fiscal year was leveraged to bring in NC Pre-K funding for that classroom. This presented an opportunity to re-invest approximately \$40,000 of the funds initially set aside for the Johnston classroom to open another new classroom.

Background

We are committed to building a community that is healthy, safe, well-educated and thriving. Early childhood education and development have a clear impact on the economic vitality and safety of our community. Ensuring that children have access to high quality and affordable early childhood programs can help children prepare for school and succeed in later life while strengthening parents' workforce access, advance their career, and increase their earning potential. Research shows that money spent on young children is an effective investment, yielding benefits immediately to parents and for many decades to come for the children. Participants in high quality early childhood programs go on to have more educational success, higher earnings, pay more taxes, and are less likely to rely on government assistance. Pre-k improves math and language skills, social and emotional skills, and other skills that contribute to school readiness and success. Children who experience pre-K are more likely to graduate high school and attend a four-year college, showing the lasting impacts of this investment.

In our community, as in many jurisdictions across North Carolina and the nation, access to pre-k is limited based on availability and affordability. At-risk families face additional barriers such as income, educational attainment, complex behavioral and health care needs, trauma, and fragmented support systems. Because of these proven benefits and need, Buncombe County prioritizes expanded access to high quality preschool.

Learn More

Why preschool is imperative, the current need and climate, and opportunities to expand access, contact the Asheville-Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative at www.abppc.org

Buncombe County's work with community partners, visit www.buncombecounty.org or contact Rachael Nygaard, Director of Strategic Partnerships at (828) 250-6536.