



# Early Childhood Education Committee

Update to Board of Commissioners

June 1, 2020



# Early Childhood Education & Development Fund

- Early Childhood Education and Development Fund established Oct 2018 via [Resolution #18-10-16](#)
- Focus on increasing the availability of high-quality early childhood care and education with an emphasis on pre-k programs
- Annual investment of \$3.6 million beginning in the FY2020 budget with an annual increase of 2% in future years:
  - FY2020: \$3,600,000
  - FY2021: \$3,672,000
  - FY2022: \$3,745,440
  - Investment to date: \$11,017,440



# Early Childhood Education Committee

Purpose is to engage with community partners, solicit public input and make policy and funding recommendations to the Board of Commissioners

- 15 members:
  - 3 members of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
  - 1 business community or economic development professional
  - 1 funder or community investment professional
  - 1 parent
  - 1 pediatrician or medical professional in service to young children
  - 1 professor or higher education professional
  - 1 retiree from the field of early childhood education
  - 6 members of the public representing the community at large





# FY2020 & FY2021 grant results

- Program-level goals are set by each grantee, and results are reported on [www.buncombecounty.org/grants](http://www.buncombecounty.org/grants)
- Some highlights:
  - 239 early learning early learning spots added
  - 13 projects including professional & workforce development
  - 5 projects including behavioral specialists
  - 2 projects supporting teacher pay increases



# Focusing our impact

Jan 2021 charge by Commissioners:

- Early Childhood Education Committee to work with staff to develop recommendations for increasing access to quality pre-k
- Over past 4 months:
  - Formed ad hoc working group
  - Established definitions
  - Reviewed data
  - Studied existing models
  - Gathered input
  - Created recommendation direction





# Purpose

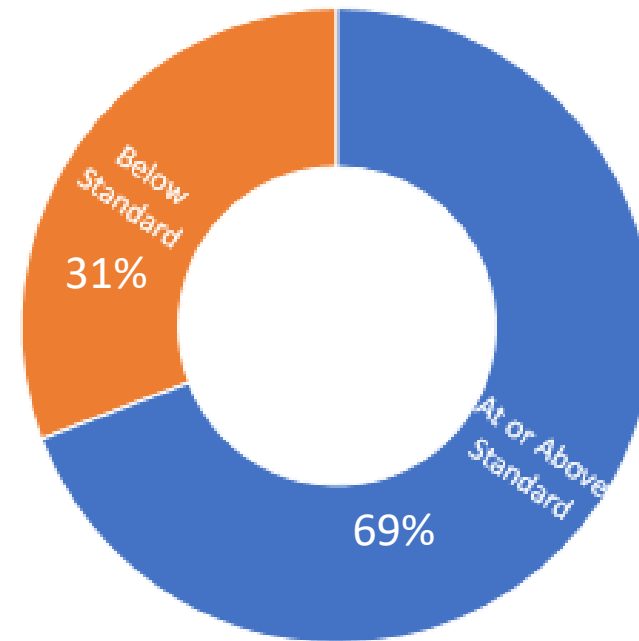
ALL Asheville City and Buncombe County students enter kindergarten ready and fully prepared for success in school



# 31% of children in Buncombe County are not ready for kindergarten



2019 Consolidated AVL City and Buncombe Co. Schools  
Pre-K Readiness Assessment Scores





# Better data needed

- The use of the same k-readiness instruments by both local public school systems would facilitate the ability to evaluate program success
- Pre-k data linked with k-12 data would facilitate analysis of long-term benefits of pre-k program
- Data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity & income would provide more revealing information about targeting particular programmatic & community needs
- Measurements of whole-child readiness with data on several domains (social emotional, gross/fine motor, language & literacy, self help etc.) would better inform program focus



# Current Buncombe Landscape

4-year olds enrolled in licensed early care/education in Buncombe County	1,157
Total population of 4-year olds in Buncombe County	2,532
Percent served in all licensed early care/education in Buncombe County	46%

**17.1%** of children in Buncombe County are living below the federal poverty level

(American Community Survey 2019)  
(Family of 4 = \$25,750 per year)

Almost **42%** of children in Buncombe County are living below 200% of federal poverty level

Learn more about The State of Childcare in Buncombe County at Buncombe Partnership for Children's Reports & Research website: <https://buncombepfc.org/reports/>



# NC Pre-kindergarten Program (NC Pre-K)

- Provides free, high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible 4-year-old children
- Serves families at or below 75% state median income (about 200% Federal Poverty Level) & children who have risk factors (educational needs, developmental delays, chronic health conditions, English Language Learners, children recovering from trauma)
- High quality program with proven effectiveness
- Current utilization in Buncombe: 435 slots by 8 providers across 27 locations



# Pre-k works

- [\*DUKE UNIVERSITY STUDY\*](#)
- [\*FRANK PORTER GRAHAM CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE, UNC CHAPEL HILL\*](#)
- [\*IMPACT OF NC'S EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS\*](#)
- [\*THE CASE FOR UNIVERSAL PRE-K JUST GOT STRONGER\*](#)

QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT:

# 7-10% ROI

“The rate of return for investment in quality early education for disadvantaged children is 7-10% per annum through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity and reduced crime.”

**James Heckman**

Nobel Laureate in Economics

LEARN MORE AT [HECKMANEQUATION.ORG](https://heckmanequation.org)



# Barriers in the local system

## Challenges for families

- Lack of information about services
- Complex process to apply and enroll
- Cost for wrap around services
- Site locations not convenient
- Lack of transportation
- Hours/schedule doesn't meet family needs
- Language
- Trauma/behavioral health needs
- Outside eligibility for services

## Challenges for providers

- Start up costs not supported
- No start up timeframe to meet program requirements
- Expensive to meet program requirements
- Reimbursement rates less than cost to deliver the service
- Very low teacher pay and incentives
- Lack of qualified teachers



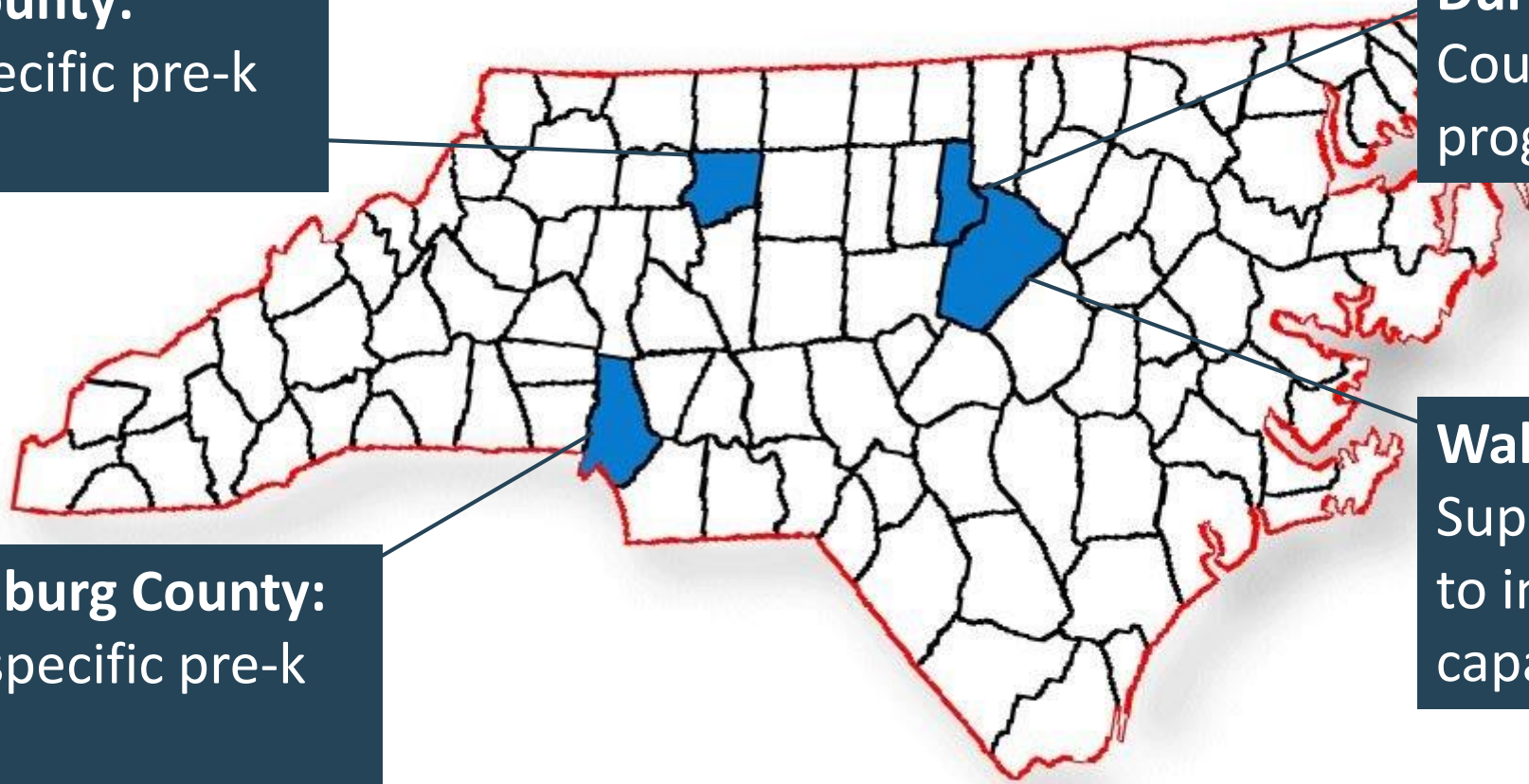
# Other NC county-funded models

**Forsyth County:**  
County-specific pre-k program

**Durham County:**  
County-specific pre-k program

**Mecklenburg County:**  
County-specific pre-k program

**Wake County:**  
Supplemental approach to increase the reach & capacity of NC Pre-K





# Other Context

## My Future NC:

- Statewide initiative to close the educational attainment gap
- NC Pre-K enrollment goal to increase the percent of eligible 4-year olds served 53% to 75% statewide
- For Buncombe, this would mean expanding from 435 to 915 slots (additional 480 slots)

## American Families Plan:

- Presidential proposal that includes federal universal pre-k in partnership with state NC Pre-K



# Key elements for a local pre-k model

- Diverse, inclusive and equitable (for children, communities and the Early Childhood workforce)
- High quality program model
- Accessible for all families
- Reflective of family & community voice
- Data focused
- Appropriately financed (fully funded)
- Responsive to changes in the early childhood system



# Planned Direction

- Establish a local model to supplement and expand the existing NC Pre-K program to increase kindergarten readiness
- Offer more robust support to existing providers
- Create access for new providers join the program
- Include career development partnerships to address the workforce desert
- Build infrastructure to address data gaps



# Intended Result

- Responsive to changes in Early Childhood Education System
- Position our community with capacity to expand NC Pre-K with State/Federal funding
- More children served
- Increased access
- Strengthened Workforce
- Enhanced data
- Higher levels of kindergarten readiness
- Narrow the achievement gap



# Thank you!

- Board of Commissioners
- County Staff
- Asheville-Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative
- Buncombe Partnership for Children
- Durham, Forsyth, Mecklenburg & Wake Counties
- NC Early Childhood Foundation
- National Association for the Education of Young Children



# Next steps

- Design model and develop a multi-year implementation plan, including:
  - Community participation to shape the program
  - Data agreements with public school & pre-k systems
  - Workforce planning
  - Cost modeling
  - Other funding partners
  - Process for selecting an administrative entity & enrolling providers
  - Structure for results monitoring
  - Potential expansion phases (e.g. expanding to include 3-year olds)
- Next phase of planning process expected to take at least 6 months

