



PRE-K EXPANSION

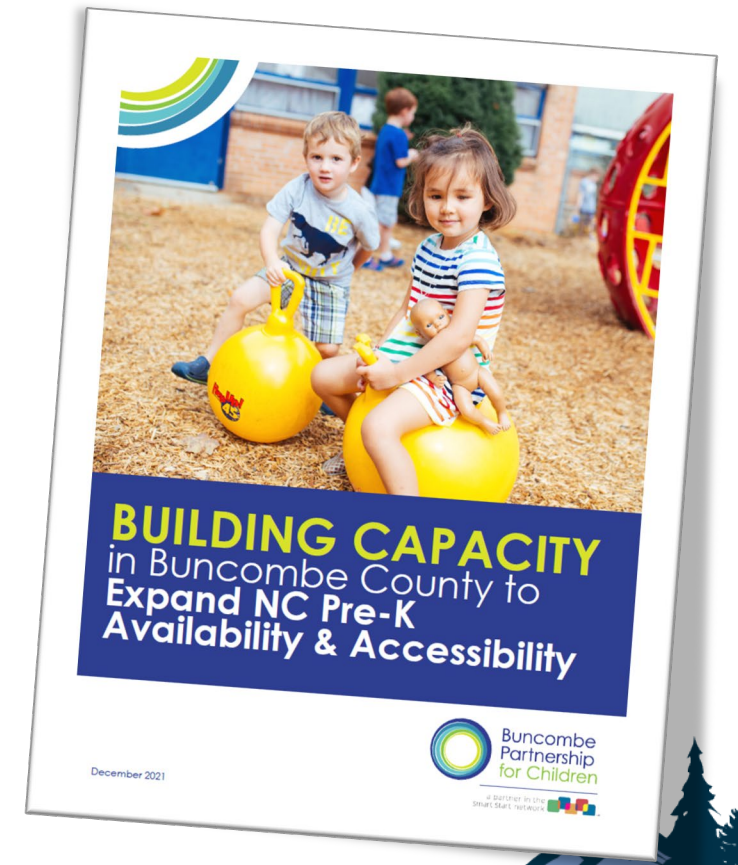
Board of Commissioners Briefing Agenda

February 15, 2022



KEY POINTS

- Early Childhood Education Fund has been making great strides to improve early care and education overall in Buncombe County
- Over the past year, we've been studying options for expanding pre-k as a way to increase kindergarten readiness
- A newly published Pre-K expansion report provides recommendations to expand availability and accessibility of NC Pre-K in Buncombe County
- Implementation could begin with a 2-year pilot



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT FUND

- Established by Commissioner resolution in FY2019
- \$3.6 million, beginning in the FY2020 budget with an annual increase of 2% in future years
- To support early care & education for children birth through kindergarten with an emphasis on preschool and pre-kindergarten
- \$11 M + invested in 1st 3 years
- Supported the creation of 267 new slots, increased program quality, teacher pay, behavioral health, family engagement & more
- Preparing for the 4th cycle of annual grants for FY2022 while also conducting pre-k expansion planning



PRE-K EXPANSION TIMELINE

We are Here

Jan 2021:

Board of Commissioners asked Early Childhood (ECE) Committee to develop recommendations for expanding pre-k

Jun 2021:

ECE Committee presented recommended direction to Board of Commissioners

Feb 2022:

ECE Committee endorsed pre-k expansion strategies

Jan-May 2021:

Ad Hoc Workgroup researched data and models for pre-k expansion

Jul-Dec 2021:

County contracted with a provider to develop strategies to expand pre-k

Jul 2022:

If approved & funded, potential launch of 2-year pilot



AD HOC WORK GROUP

- Established definitions
- Reviewed data
- Studied existing models
- Gathered input
- Met with other counties in NC (Durham, Forsyth, Mecklenburg, Wake)
- Created recommendation direction:

Establish a local model to supplement and expand the existing NC Pre-K program to increase kindergarten readiness



NC PRE-K



- Proven effective & recognized for high quality
- State-funded
- Serves 4 year olds from income-eligible families & those with risk factors such as developmental need, disability, health condition, limited English proficiency
- No cost to families
- 10-month school year; 6.5 hour school day
- Offered in a variety of settings



NC PRE-K IN BUNCOMBE CURRENTLY

- 442 NC Pre-K slots
- 49 classrooms
- 29 licensed sites
- 8 providers

35% of the 1,183 children in Buncombe County who are income eligible for NC Pre-K are enrolled in the program



EXPANDING NC PRE-K

- My Future NC 2030 goal is for 75% of eligible children to be enrolled in the NC Pre-K program
- For Buncombe, this means an additional 769 children are eligible and would benefit from the NC Pre-K experience
- To reach 75% enrollment, Buncombe County would need to serve 473 additional children annually, requiring a minimum of 26 new NC Pre-K classrooms



BARRIERS TO NC PRE-K EXPANSION

- Inadequate per-child reimbursement rate (60% of the cost)
- Lack of pay parity with K-12 & inconsistent wages across NC Pre-K settings
- No ramp-up supports for programs to meet NC Pre-K standards
- Insufficient administrative funding
- Fractured, complicated systems
- The school day/school year model
- Lack of transportation



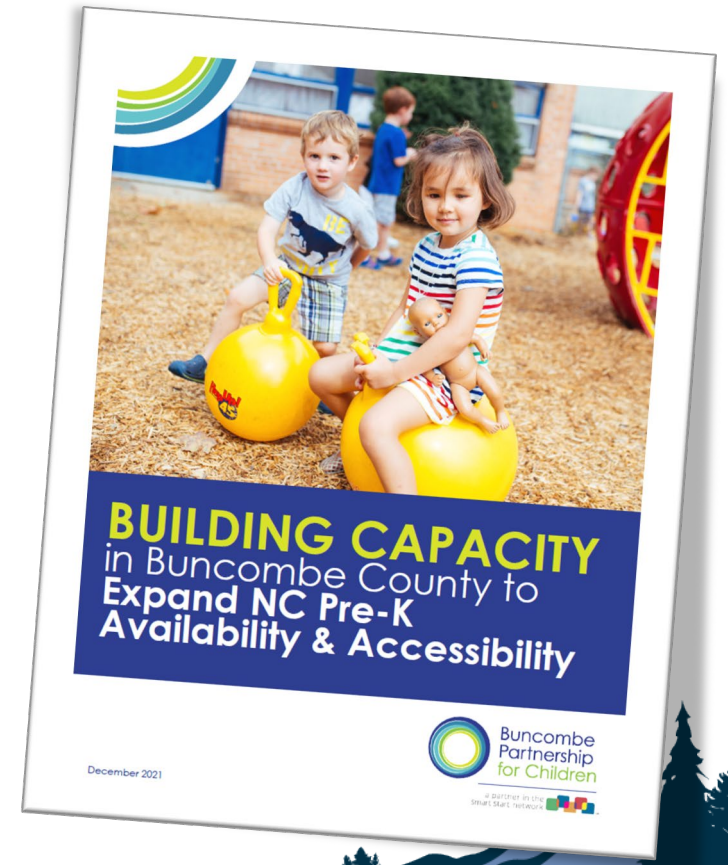
KEY ELEMENTS

- 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



PRE-K EXPANSION REPORT

- Produced by Buncombe Partnership for Children in collaboration with Asheville-Buncombe Preschool Collaborative & others
- Recommends 6 strategies for building capacity in Buncombe County to expand NC Pre-K availability and accessibility
- Published in December 2021
- Endorsed by Early Childhood Committee in February 2022
- Published online at www.buncombecounty.org/prekreport



RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase K readiness • Expand access to Pre-K • Reduce racial & ethnic disparities

Barriers to PROVIDING

Fully funded Pre-K

- Supplements slots by 36%
- Pay licensed teachers on parity with K-12
- Ensure quality supports

ECE Education & Career Pipeline

- Ed Advancement Coach
- A-B Tech tutoring
- Logistical/retention supports

Ramp up to NC Pre-K Program

- Admin & teacher coaching
- NC Pre-K tools and PD
- Logistical/retention supports

Barriers to ACCESSING

Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment

- Online application portal
- Outreach & navigation
- Coordinated placement

Expanded access to wrap-around care

- Pilot innovations
- Demand & feasibility study

Expanded access to transportation

- Pilot innovations
- Demand & feasibility study



COSTS FOR A 2-YEAR PILOT

Fully funded Pre-K

- Year 1: \$874,200
- Year 2: \$881,000
- Total: \$1,755,200

ECE Education & Career Pipeline

- Year 1: \$131,300
- Year 2: \$131,300
- Total: \$262,600

Ramp up to NC Pre-K Program

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$132,500
- Total: \$132,500

Coordinated Outreach & Enrollment

- Year 1: \$86,500
- Year 2: \$87,950
- Total: \$174,450

Expanded access to wrap-around care

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$222,500
- Total: \$222,500

Expanded access to transportation

- Year 1: n/a
- Year 2: \$168,000
- Total: \$168,000

Governance, Administration & Evaluation

- Total: \$484,750

**\$3.2
Million**



SUMMARY

- Pre-K Expansion helps advance the County's strategic goals of increasing kindergarten readiness & reducing educational disparities
- Building on the NC Pre-K model for local expansion ensures program quality while being responsive to changes at the state & federal levels
- A 2-year pilot would allow time to test and evaluate the results of this approach
- If approved and funded this spring, pilot launch could begin July 1, 2022

