



Investing in Early Learning: Bright Spots in North Carolina and Other Resources

NC Polling 2014 and 2016

Since 2014, support for early education has continued to rise among North Carolina voters across the political spectrum, according to a bipartisan poll released in 2016 by the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF). A strong majority of Republicans, Independents and Democrats want more investments in early learning—including providing greater access to affordable child care, Smart Start, NC Pre-K and programs that build parenting skills. More information about the 2016 poll is available at: <http://buildthefoundation.org/2016/09/support-for-investing-in-early-education-rises-in-north-carolina/>

Asheville Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative

A planning team of 25 community members convened in 2015 and is now managed by the Buncombe Partnership for Children and Children First/Communities in Schools. The collaborative is creating a collective plan to ensure that every 3- and 4-year old in Buncombe County has access to affordable, high-quality preschool. The Collaborative is currently investigating model design, workforce and financing options to draft a plan for expanding quality preschool, due to be released in August 2017. More information is available at: <https://www.abppc.org/>

Durham's Community Early Education/Preschool Task Force

In 2015, Durham's School Board, County Commissioners and City Council passed resolutions in support of universal, high-quality preschool for Durham's children. The Durham's Community Early Education/Preschool Task Force was convened in 2016 to develop a plan to serve all 3- and 4-year-olds in Durham County in high-quality preschool by 2023. The plan aims to first serve 4-year-olds, prioritizing children in low-income families, by August 2019. More information is available at: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1NAbOK_eLwHbW40OGIzWURJYIk

Forsyth County Universal Pre-K Steering Committee

In June 2014 a group of community leaders formed the Forsyth County Universal Pre-K Steering Committee to explore how to improve the quality and expand the capacity of center-based, early childhood settings for four-year-olds as well as discuss factors to be considered in creating a quality universal Pre-K system. Work groups target three critical areas: quality, funding and advocacy. In 2015 and 2016, the Steering Committee established standards for a high-quality system, studied the options for local funding of the system, and published a position paper.

Work groups will create a final plan by the end of 2017, to be followed by a campaign to secure local funding by November 2018 for a major expansion of Pre-K. More information is available at: <http://imprintscares.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Universal-PreK-for-Forsyth-County-Position-Paper.pdf>

Mecklenburg County Early Education Initiatives

Since 1996, Mecklenburg County has invested in Bright Beginnings, a pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds administered through the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system at elementary schools across the county. The program currently serves 3100 students in 236 classrooms in 52 elementary schools. NC Pre-K also operates in the county with 56 classrooms located in 23 community-based high quality child care centers.

In 2016, the County announced a study to develop a process to expand access to early childhood education to significantly more children. The initiative, kicked off in December 2016 through a \$500,000 grant from the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council, includes an initial feasibility study that will be followed by an implementation design study. More information is available at: <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/ci/pre-kservices/Pages/default.aspx> and <https://www.mecknc.gov/news/Pages/Mecklenburg-County-Launches-Study-to-Expand-.aspx>

In addition to the two-part study, the County received a federal Department of Education grant in December 2016 to look at a funding mechanism called Pay for Success. The \$335,667 grant for the feasibility study is for two-years.

Transylvania County Early Childhood Initiative

In 2015, an Early Childhood Initiative was formed by Transylvania County government to focus attention on early childhood development and school preparedness. The Initiative then published a “State of the Young Child” report based on seven months of research. The report showed that 77% of Transylvania County children performed below kindergarten readiness standards. That report spurred action by the county and multiple social service providers and organizations, yielding a 12% improvement in kindergarten readiness.

In 2017, the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina awarded the Smartly United Early Childhood Collective (Smart Start and United Way of Transylvania County) a \$100,000 grant over two years to begin to implement its plan to provide greater accessibility, quality and affordability of early education to improve preschool readiness. More information is available at: <http://www.unitedwaytransylvania.org/state-young-child-transylvania-county-report-released-12142015>

Wake County

In 2015, the Wake County Commissioners voted to invest in expanding NC Pre-K in their community. The 2015 county budget provided \$325,728 to serve an additional 144 young children. By 2017, the county budget for NC Pre-K increased to \$488,600, now serving a total of 359 additional children. The 2017 budget provides an additional \$100,000 dollar to dollar match to encourage community investment. More information is available at: <http://financingtools.buildthefoundation.org/project/wakecounty/>

Other Resources

North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation <i>Local Funding for Early Learning: A Community Toolkit</i>	http://financingtools.buildthefoundation.org/
NC Budget and Tax Center <i>Results of 2016 Ballot Initiatives in North Carolina</i>	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1NAbOK_eLwHNm51ZENhWI93SWM/view?usp=sharing
First 2000 Days	http://www.first2000days.org/
North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation <i>Investing Today in North Carolina's Workforce of Tomorrow, 2017</i>	https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1NAbOK_eLwHX0FHMFN6d0hqTG8/view
Governing: The States and Localities "The New Strategy for Raising Money for Kids," December 2016	www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-ballot-dedicated-tax-childrens-fund.html
Forum for Youth Investment	http://forumfyi.org/childrens-funding-project
Funding the Next Generation	http://www.fundingthenextgeneration.org/

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