



## POSITION PAPER

# Universal Pre-K Initiative

Forsyth County, North Carolina





# Universal Pre-K Initiative

for Forsyth County, North Carolina  
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## INTRODUCTION

Early care and learning is alive and well in Forsyth County. There's never been a better time to marshal greater public awareness and meaningful, scalable support.

We already know what high-quality, early care and learning looks like, and how to measure it.

It begins before birth. It is the distinctive domain and responsibility of a child's parents and primary caregivers, both in the home and in the surrounding community. It is the principal, developmentally-appropriate script in every early childhood setting – in the home, in the extended family, with neighbors, in medical practices, in houses of worship, in family child-care homes and child-care centers, and in classrooms in public and private sites.

It is the defining mission of parents, children, and professional care givers as members of the family, the community, and the polity.

Child care and early development are also critical to the success of corporate enterprise. Strengthening our early education system is one of our community's best market-positioning strategies. By improving early education we strengthen opportunities not only for employers and the current work force, but for the employers and workforce of the future, as high-quality, affordable child care is a primary building block for the fitness of every generation of families, employers, and employees.

In Forsyth County, we are building the civic awareness and the supporting infrastructure to ensure that all parents, families, and early childhood professionals have the tools they need to help our children thrive, beginning at birth.

High-quality, affordable child care is not a prerequisite for every family, but it is a necessity for many. We are able to serve less than a quarter of our 3- and 4-year-old children, although there is evidence that as many as 90 percent of households would enroll their children (particularly four-year-

olds) in high-quality, early childhood settings outside the home if they could afford the upwards of \$8,400 annual cost.

For families that want their children to have the benefit of larger, more socially-diverse early childhood settings, we have built a limited, mixed public-private child-care delivery system. It includes private independent and corporate providers, the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools, and Family Services Head Start program.

Important private philanthropic and corporate interests have awakened to the economic and educational opportunities and to the urgent needs of our families and employers. The Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust's Great Expectations initiative is investing between \$30 and \$40 million over 10 to 15 years to ensure that children in Forsyth County reach developmentally appropriate milestones in the first five years, enter kindergarten ready to learn, and leave set for success in school and life. Reynolds American Incorporated is leading a coalition of corporate donors in the ambitious Project Impact. The initiative plans to spend \$45 million over six years to achieve two overarching goals: boost third-grade reading and math proficiency among students in the district and close literacy gaps with other urban school districts in North Carolina. To that end, the initiative will fund an expansion of Pre-K programs, provide extended learning options, and increase staff development and instructional support, beginning with the 2016–17 school year.

Advocates for children, families, and economic development take great encouragement from these vibrant, private initiatives, building upon the foundation of current public and parental investments. They have already positioned Winston-Salem and Forsyth County as an innovation hub for early learning in North Carolina, employing a model of private–public partnership to ensure that our children succeed, our families thrive, and our communities prosper.

## CHAMPIONING UNIVERSAL PRE-K FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

In June 2014 a group of local early childhood professionals came together to form the Universal Pre-K Steering Committee to explore how to improve the quality and expand the capacity of center-based, early childhood settings for our four-year-olds.

### **The group focused on the needs of families with four-year-old children for several reasons:**

- Many members of the working group already were accountable for operating or funding the operations of high-quality early childhood settings serving three- and four-year-olds with public funds;
- Settings for three- and four-year-olds, though expensive, carry less cost than for serving infants and toddlers;
- Most families recognize the benefits of having their children enrolled in child development programs as their children approach kindergarten;
- Greater state and federal investment is available for serving three- and four-year-olds than for younger children;
- Because of the North Carolina Pre-K Program (NC Pre-K), there is already more coordination of services and higher standards of care for children in four-year-old classrooms;
- Expanding the availability of four-year-old classrooms mirrors the roll-out of kindergarten (the five-year-old classroom) in the last quarter of the 20th century;
- Many other communities around the United States – both smaller and larger than Winston-Salem/Forsyth County – have been successful in expanding early learning programs for younger children by beginning with four-year-olds.

The Universal Pre-K Initiative Steering Committee convened a forum for professionals involved in early childhood work in March 2015 to discuss the factors that need to be considered in creating a quality universal Pre-K system. Following the forum, three Work Groups were formed involving 25 individuals from the early childhood development field. The groups targeted three critical areas: quality, funding, and advocacy. They met during the summer and fall of 2015 to 1) establish standards for a high-quality system, 2) study the options for local funding of the system, and 3) identify the benefits of the system for the community.

## PURPOSE OF THE POSITION PAPER

Through this position paper and subsequent activities, the Universal Pre-K Initiative Steering Committee seeks to build support for a high-quality universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County that:

- Supports children and working families,
- Increases school readiness,
- Directs more educational investments to the earliest years when children undergo critical periods and aspects of brain development,
- Closes the achievement gap,
- Improves public safety and health outcomes, and
- Boosts Forsyth County as an innovative and supportive community for all of its residents.

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of three Work Groups and additional research and analysis by members of the Universal Pre-K Steering Committee. The report is offered as a road map to guide Forsyth County toward a universal Pre-K system.

- I. Advocacy Strategies
- II. Funding Options
- III. Quality Standards
- IV. The Way Forward

# I. ADVOCACY

## Making the Case for Universal Pre-Kindergarten in Forsyth County

The Advocacy Work Group focused on the development of a strategic messaging and outreach plan to effectively mobilize political, corporate, and community leadership in adopting a universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County.

The first step toward building this support is to create an advocacy campaign centered on a broad message that demonstrates how universal Pre-K will provide benefits to the entire community. The campaign will include targeted messages for businesses, education, and community leaders, as well as for parents and the general public, that all connect to the overarching message.

Support for expanding early childhood education is growing. Early childhood education is one of the few bipartisan educational issues that truly crosses partisan lines – both national and North Carolina polls show that strong majorities of voters affiliated with both political parties and independents approve of increased support for early childhood programs (54% Republican, 70% Independent, 91% Democrat<sup>1</sup>). The primary challenge will be translating that support into the political will necessary to provide the requisite funding to expand and sustain early childhood programming.

### Grassroots AND Grass-tops

A successful advocacy strategy will engage community leaders, school district officials, political leaders, early childhood providers, the business community, local law enforcement, and other decision makers who are in a position to advocate and implement a universal Pre-K system. This strategy must include a parallel effort to garner support from the larger community of parents, families, taxpayers, and voters who will help finance and directly benefit from universal Pre-K. Community leaders who are prepared to embrace the idea of universal Pre-K must also have the

support of the broader community because of the significant political determination required to obtain public funding for universal Pre-K.

### Grassroots - Community Education/ Preliminary Outreach – Figuring Out Where Things Stand in Forsyth County

In spite of the general level of support for expanded early childhood education, significant community outreach is needed to provide public education and determine where the community currently stands on the issue. In communities that have undertaken successful efforts, advocates were frequently surprised by how little community members knew about Pre-K and how much public education was needed. An initial sounding would explore:

1. What the community already knows about early childhood education
2. Whether community members consider it important or beneficial for children, families, and the community
3. What steps they think need to be taken to establish a universal Pre-K system
4. How involved people are willing to be in support of the effort

Reaching parents can be difficult given the demands on parents' schedules. However, parents from all walks of life, and particularly those with young children, are increasingly technology-oriented. A communications strategy must be developed that allows the campaign to communicate with parents via text, email, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media.

The advocacy campaign should target local school groups, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and



other school-based resources designed for parents, as well as adult education programs, church groups, and civic organizations. More research and discussion are needed to develop creative ways to engage parents who ordinarily are not reached through traditional education and outreach efforts.

### **Grass-tops – Strategically Growing the Circle of Universal Pre-K Supporters**

The advocacy campaign targeted at grass-top leaders has already begun. The Steering Committee, work group members, and attendees at the March 2015 event have already expressed strong support for expanding the availability of quality early childhood education programs. Members of the Advocacy Work Group have contacted community leaders from other sectors to get a sense of the level of support that already exists outside the early childhood development field. The results have been very positive. An advocacy campaign can build on these early steps by sharing data, research, and talking points with leaders who favor the expansion of the Pre-K system in order to develop a cohort of community “champions” for universal Pre-K.

### **Messages for Specific Groups**

The overarching theme of the campaign should be how universal Pre-K benefits everyone and positions Forsyth County as an innovative, forward-thinking community, attractive to families and businesses. At the same time, specific messages need to appeal to the various constituencies. The work group is developing a toolkit for use in broad communications efforts, as well as providing research and talking points tailored to specific audiences.

The Advocacy Work Group identified nine key messages in support of universal Pre-K:

#### **1. Universal Pre-K will benefit children throughout their school years and into adulthood.**

Parents want to know they are making decisions that provide the best education possible for their children. Pre-K establishes the foundation on which a child can build throughout life.

- **High-quality Programs are Effective** – Extensive research studies have demonstrated that high-quality Pre-K programs help children become more successful in their educational careers and throughout adulthood. The early years in a child’s life, when the brain is developing and forming connections most rapidly, represent a critical window of opportunity to develop a child’s full potential – socially, cognitively, and academically.
- **Pre-K Nurtures a Child’s Mind at the Most Critical Time** – A child’s brain develops most rapidly in the early years of life, well before entering kindergarten. Early intervention is akin to preventative medicine, helping children develop faculties and skills during a vital period in their development when they are most cognitively adaptive and rapidly developing new neural pathways.
- **Benefits That Last a Lifetime** – The benefits of a quality early childhood education program last throughout the course of a child’s education and result in improved outcomes as adults in terms of post-secondary educational attainment, increased income, home ownership, health status, and less contact with the criminal justice system.
- **Healthier Community** – Children who participated in North Carolina’s Abecedarian Project in the 1970s – one of the first early childhood development programs to be rigorously evaluated – are currently healthier than adults who did not receive early childhood education. Children in the Abecedarian project received earlier screenings and developed healthy eating habits through the program.



Indicators of improved health include lower rates of high blood pressure, obesity, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

## 2. Universal Pre-K provides far-reaching economic and social benefits to the community.

Quality Pre-K programs:

- Reduce dropout rates, special education costs, medical costs, and save money on law enforcement, courts, and incarceration;
- Produce a more prepared citizenry, workforce, and military;
- Increase lifetime earnings and health outcomes;
- Reduce the need for remediation, enabling schools to focus on student progress rather than redress.

## 3. Quality Pre-K programs prepare children to succeed in school.

Support for universal kindergarten programs grew in the late 1960s as a means of preparing children for school. A growing body of research has shown that the most critical period of brain development occurs prior to kindergarten.

- 4-year-olds are ready to learn!
- Increased social maturity and other non-cognitive skills fostered in Pre-K lead to success in school.
- Increased confidence gained by young learners is long-lasting.
- Quality Pre-K programs help children develop a foundation for math and literacy, reduce school behavior problems and special education participation, and reduce the number of children who are held back in school.

- Pre-K is a critical building block for achieving the state's goal to have all children reading at grade level by grade 3, and boosts the school district's efforts to improve third-grade reading and math proficiency.

## 4. Quality Pre-K programs help close the achievement gap.

High-quality, early educational interventions are the most effective tools available to close the achievement gaps among students of different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds.

- While quality Pre-K programs can benefit any child, research shows that these programs are especially beneficial for minority and low-income children.
- Pre-K programs can overcome insufficiencies in social-emotional development, cognitive skills, language development, and exposure to new words.
- The NC Pre-K program has been shown to reduce the achievement gap by 31% in math and 37% in reading.

## 5. Universal Pre-K supports working families.

- Given the high cost of quality child care (approximately \$8,400 per child per year), universal Pre-K can reduce part of the burden of this expense for working families.
- Pre-K programs can enhance parenting skills by bringing families in contact with resources that can support parents earlier in their child's development.
- Pre-K facilities often function as hubs for community health and the early identification of developmental and health issues.

## 6. Universal Pre-K improves public safety.

- Quality early learning experiences prepare children for long-term, academic success, thereby reducing the likelihood they will become involved in crime in later years. Pre-K programs have a clear, positive impact on graduation rates and other educational outcomes. Adults who do not have a high school diploma are three times more likely to be incarcerated than adults who have graduated.
- District attorneys and law enforcement officials across the country support expanded early childhood education programs as a means of reducing future crime rates. Successful early childhood coalitions frequently include judges, police chiefs, district attorneys, court counselors, juvenile defenders, and other public safety and justice personnel.

## 7. Universal Pre-K provides a significant return on investment.

- Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman estimates long term savings of \$7 for every \$1 spent on early childhood education.<sup>ii</sup>  
  
—This return is even greater in North Carolina due to the high quality of the NC Pre-K program.

## 8. Universal Pre-K can build upon our existing system.

An expanded, universal Pre-K system will require significant increases in the capacity of local organizations that currently provide Pre-K programs. Forsyth County can build on the solid foundation provided by the current coordination of established, publicly-funded Pre-K programs in the public schools and the community, including private childcare centers and Family Services Head Start. This mixed system of public and private providers affords

parents with options for service locations, schedules, and programming that help meet the varied needs of families. There is strong anecdotal and survey evidence that parents appreciate the choice among public and private programs for their very young children.

The North Carolina Pre-K (NC Pre-K) program offers a model for establishing standards of excellence and making effective use of the multiple funding streams that would support a universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County.

- Referred to as “The Jewel of North Carolina’s Education System,” NC Pre-K is consistently ranked nationally as one of the top five Pre-K programs in the country, based on meeting all the critical indicators of a high-quality program.  
  
—NC Pre-K has a high-quality curriculum, high facility and material standards, low student-teacher ratios, and highly-trained educators with sound foundational requirements, certifications, and continuing professional development.  
  
—Children enrolled in NC Pre-K classrooms have improved test scores, better verbal skills, more developed social-emotional skills, longer attention spans, and other factors leading to success in school.  
  
—NC Pre-K students are less likely to require remediation or be in need of special education services during their K-12 years.
- The NC Pre-K funding model integrates multiple funding streams – Title I, Head Start, and NC Pre-K – under one, state-sanctioned, evidence-informed, high-quality service model.

## 9. Building upon our existing Pre-K system positions our community to compete for new state and federal Pre-K funds.

The full implementation of a universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County – enrolling up to 90% of the community’s four-year-olds – will grow incrementally over a period of years and require additional local private and public funding. At the same time we anticipate there will be increased state and federal funding for early childhood development programs, particularly Pre-K. Early childhood development is one of the few issues to enjoy bipartisan support among voters and elected officials. For example, in the past year alone, Congress has:

- Reauthorized the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV);
- Included support for early childhood education in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which also authorizes Preschool Development Grants for states; and
- Appropriated nearly \$1 billion in new money for Head Start and Early Head Start.

At the state level, following recession-driven, across-the-board reductions in early education spending that bottomed out in 2011, the state legislature has restored more than \$20 million in recurring, early education investment since 2014.

By proceeding with the expansion of quality Pre-K programs at the local level now, Forsyth County will be prepared to take advantage of additional public investments as funds become available at the state and federal levels in the future.

## Additional Resources Needed to Achieve Advocacy Goals

Training and public education events will need to be conducted across the county to inform the public about the benefits of quality Pre-K programs and build support for the expansion of the system. Professional staff and consultation will be needed to spearhead advocacy and community education efforts in the long term.

An advocacy campaign will also need a website and resources to reach parents digitally, e.g., text messaging, a Facebook page, Twitter account, etc. A website could also house data, talking points, research, and presentation materials tailored to various audiences, available to the media and policymakers in an easily accessible and intelligible format. Testimonial videos and statements by parents of how Pre-K has positively touched their lives will be essential.

Campaign volunteers and staff will assist key community leaders in writing and placing opinion pieces and letters to the editor in local print and on-line publications. Campaign leaders can meet with editorial boards and news departments of local media to educate them on the issues, and secure editorial support for universal Pre-K. Researchers and scholars at local colleges and universities can be enlisted to speak out in support of the program.

## Building a Network of Supporters — Identifying “Champions”

A large network of community members and leaders is needed to sustain this ambitious effort. Most successful efforts to expand early childhood education have enlisted respected public figures to actively champion the cause, in addition to fostering broad community support and securing the commitment of public officials. A range of supportive individuals and groups in the business, education, government, health care, media, justice and public safety, faith-based, and non-profit sectors have been identified, a pool from which the champions needed to achieve the goal of universal Pre-K will emerge.

## II. FUNDING

### Financing a High-quality Universal Pre-K System

The Funding Work Group focused on determining the level of funding required to support a universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County and identifying possible mechanisms for funding that system.

#### A. Estimating the number of students to be served in a universal Pre-K system

We begin with live-birth data for Forsyth County, NC. (Data source: North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management)

Year	Live Births
2014	4,548
2013	4,522
2012	4,624
2011	4,581
2010	4,693

The Office of State Budget and Management also estimates the number of 4-year-old children in Forsyth County as follows:

Year	4-Year-Olds
2015	4,685
2016	4,695
2017	4,675
2018	4,654
2019	4,616
2020	4,448
2025	4,509

We also compared data from the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools on the number of five-year-old children who enroll in kindergarten with the number of live births five years previously. Enrollment data is affected by population movement into and out of the county from birth to 4 and 5 years of age; the number of births in Forsyth County hospitals to parents who reside in adjoining

counties; and the number of parents who choose not to enroll their children in public kindergarten at the age of five.

Year	Kindergarten
2015–2016	4,297 <sup>iii</sup>
2014–2015	4,621
2013–2014	4,602
2012–2013	4,514
2011–2012	4,304
2010–2011	4,398
2009–2010	3,998

Based on these data we project an age cohort of approximately 4500 children eligible for entry into a universal Pre-K system.

However, we assume that entry into a universal Pre-K system will be voluntary, not mandatory. Based on the experience of other communities that have implemented voluntary universal Pre-K systems, we can project that approximately 65% of eligible children would enroll in the first year, increasing to 80% in the second year, and capping at approximately 90% of eligible children by the third year.

#### B. How to calculate the cost of a universal Pre-K system

North Carolina calculates per pupil expenditures as salary and benefits for administrators and teachers, transportation, classroom materials, classroom services, lunches, and other non-instructional support services.

The primary factors in determining the cost of a universal Pre-K system are: (1) class size, at 18 pupils per class; (2) staffing, with one teacher and one teacher assistant per class; [3] a school year length of 10 months; and (4) 6.5 hours to 8 hours

of operation per day. Other factors include Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) facility and cost standards for serving four-year-old children.

Currently, there are three principal public and two main private sources of funding for four-year-old classrooms in Forsyth County. Public sources include NC Pre-K (state funds) and Head Start and Title I (both federal funds). Parent fees and corporate funding through Project Impact<sup>iv</sup> are the private sources.

For a detailed review of current cost and payment strategies for our four-year-old classrooms, see Appendix C. Based upon those figures and assuming an age cohort of 4,500 children at a 90% enrollment rate, 4,050 children would enroll in the universal Pre-K system. There are already 1,184 children enrolled in publicly-funded Pre-K programs (cf. page 13 below for a census of publicly-funded Pre-K children.) At \$8,400<sup>v</sup> per child, the additional cost for enrolling the remaining 2,866 children would be \$24,074,400 annually.

### C. What is the projected return on investment?

While the cost of a universal Pre-K system may seem daunting, the projected return on investment for a high-quality Pre-K program is substantial.

A study of the Chicago Child-Parent Center, a public preschool program for at-risk children, tracked participants to age 20. They were more likely to have finished high school – and less likely to have been held back a grade level in school, to need remedial help or to have been arrested. Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, has estimated that \$48,000 in benefits accrued to the public per child from participation, with an estimated return of \$7 for every dollar invested.” (Southern Regional Education Board Report of the Early Childhood Commission, 2015)

A benefit-cost analysis for Oklahoma’s universal Pre-K program concludes that earnings increases alone provide a \$3 or \$4 to \$1 return.<sup>vi</sup> As earnings are less than half the benefits in the comprehensive benefit-cost analyses performed in other studies, projecting a total return of \$7 to \$1 for the Oklahoma program is not a stretch.

The Perry Preschool Program has been the subject of a series of benefit-cost analyses since 1985. As the length of follow-up increased from age 19 to 27 and then 40, the evidence for more confident estimates of the benefits and the estimated benefit-cost ratio has risen to \$16 to \$1.<sup>7</sup>

### D. What are the options for funding a local universal Pre-K system?

**Local Option Sales Tax.** Counties can increase the sales tax by one-quarter of a penny, provided the public approves the sales tax option by referendum. The ballot cannot say how the funds will be used, but the County Board of Commissioners can adopt a resolution that stipulates how it plans to use the additional revenue. Of the 25 counties that have received voter approval for local option sales taxes, only Durham County resolved to allocate some of the funds to early childhood education. A \$0.0025 sales tax in Forsyth County would realize approximately \$9,834,375 in annual revenue.<sup>viii</sup>

**Increase or earmark local property tax revenue.** The Board of County Commissioners has the ability to increase property tax rates in North Carolina. Property taxes have long been used to fund education in other states, and there are a growing number of localities and states that allocate a portion of local property taxes to early education.

**Social Impact bond financing.**<sup>ix</sup> Some local communities – in Utah, New York and Massachusetts – have leveraged private capital to finance investments in public programs and services. Utah is the only state to fund early

childhood education in targeted school districts through this mechanism. This financing tool is based on the ability to measure results, as well as to capture the savings from preventive investments rather than treatment costs. The local government sets a specific, measurable outcome that it wants to achieve and promises to pay an external organization if that organization achieves the outcome. Investors provide the working capital, and a third party evaluator determines whether the outcome has been achieved. If the program succeeds in reducing government costs, the government pays the external organization the agreed upon sum, with a return paid to the investors for the upfront risk. For example, Pre-K programs could be funded through a social impact bond on the basis that the school district will experience reduced costs for special education.

**Tax Credits.** Maine, Oklahoma and Florida have issued tax credits for early childhood businesses. However, given the loss of tax revenue at the state level, such an approach, without strong accountability standards, might be difficult to pursue. Another approach is to offer individuals tax credits for tuition and fees paid for early education.

**Parent Fees and Sliding Scale.** Some states and localities (most notably Seattle) have adopted graduated payment or sliding scales to reduce the cost of the program for the state or local jurisdiction, while obtaining wide support among the electorate by reducing the cost of child care for working and middle class families. For example, most middle class families would support a high-quality Pre-K program if they paid a portion of tuition and fees that was significantly less than what they were paying for child care without the program. Low income families would pay tuition and fees similar to those paid under the current North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) scholarship program and the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) child-care subsidy program, which is 10% of a family’s gross monthly income. Families enrolled in NC Pre-K, Head Start, Title I, and Project Impact programs do not pay a parent fee. With the addition of tuition and fee income, the cost of the program to the general budget would be substantially less.

**E. Current Funding Scenario for Pre-K Programs in Forsyth County**

Currently in Forsyth County, approximately 1,079 four-year-old children receive some amount of

<b>Four-year-old children enrolled in licensed, subsidized, early learning &amp; care by funding source AY 2016-17</b>		
NC Pre-K	138	At a combination of private provider & public school sites
NC Pre-K + Head Start	218	At a combination of private provider & Head Start sites
NC Pre-K + Title I	246	At public schools
Head Start	162	At Family Services’ Kernersville, Mineral Springs, Sarah Y. Austin, and WSSU locations
Head Start + Title I	54	At public schools
Title I	102	At public schools
CCDF	99	At private provider sites (estimated)
NCPC Family Child Care Scholarships	60	At private provider sites
Project Impact	105	At public schools
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,184</b>	



public support to attend full day Pre-K programs. This represents just less than one quarter of the approximately 4,500 four-year-olds in the county.

Public funding for Pre-K classrooms consists of federal funding (CCDF, Head Start, and Title I), state funding (NC Pre-K and NCPC), and parent fees. The current model is based on a reimbursement rate per child that is supported by one or more funding sources, often using a layered or blended system that combines funding streams and parent co-pays to accomplish the total rate.

This methodology is challenging to implement, in large part, due to eligibility requirements and funding restrictions that are sometimes incompatible with each other and complex to administer. At present, four separate organizations – Forsyth County Department of Social Services, Family Services, Inc., Smart Start of Forsyth County, Inc., and Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools – manage their respective funding streams, creating complexities and challenges for parents and administrators alike.

The table on the previous page provides an overview of children enrolled in publicly-funded Pre-K programs for the 2016–17 school year, plus the 105 children funded through Project Impact.

## **F. Administering a System with Multiple-Funding Stream.**

Perhaps the greatest challenge in relation to funding will be how to effectively administer a system that will draw on financial resources from multiple sources, with local funding added to existing streams of state, federal, and corporate funds. Experts on both the right and the left have decried the complexities of the current funding mélange.

Today’s federal early care and education policies are fragmented, inefficient, and unnecessarily complex. Federal policymaking is driven by coping with what exists rather than by what we

are trying to accomplish. At the state and local levels, integrating incoherent federal funding streams with growing city- and state-funded early childhood programs is difficult to impossible. In the dysfunctional landscape of federal early childhood policy, policymakers have gotten locked into choosing among three bad options: tinkering around the edges of existing programs, trying to cut them, or adding new ones on top of what is already in place.

Entire offices in early childhood programs are staffed with experts dedicated to what the early childhood field calls “blending and braiding”: the complicated, bureaucratic task of combining incoherent federal funding streams into money that is actually useful to children and working families. (*Katherine B. Stevens, November 2015 “Renewing Childhood’s Promise,” American Enterprise Institute*)

Child Care and Development Fund, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Head Start, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Title I [are the most commonly used funding sources for Pre-K programs]. Because these federal grants flow through different state agencies to address different needs, the funding streams and services are disconnected. Kindergarten readiness programs for children birth to age five are usually administered by multiple state agencies. Too often, silos among the agencies that administer the funds result in duplicated services, service gaps, confusion for families and funding inefficiencies.

SREB’s reports have been clear that stable funding is critical to strong programs. SREB encouraged the various state agencies responsible for children’s programs to cooperate, particularly in accessing, leveraging and appropriating funding from state, federal and private sources. States that led in cooperative funding and programming led in outcomes. (*SREB Report of the Early Childhood Commission, 2015*)



## III. QUALITY

### Maintaining and Improving High Standards While Expanding Pre-K Availability

The Quality Work Group reviewed existing criteria and standards related to quality Pre-K programs. As stated in the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development* document, “Children’s experiences before they enter school matter – research shows that children who experience high-quality care and education, and who enter school well prepared, are more successful in school and later in their lives.” (*NC Foundations Task Force. 2013. p.1*)

North Carolina has numerous programs and initiatives such as Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and Nurse Family Partnerships that promote children’s learning and development. Although focusing on somewhat different areas of development, all are designed to improve the quality of programs and services in North Carolina and, in turn, benefit young children and their families.

The work group identified several common components that have been determined to characterize high-quality programs, environments, and experiences for young children, including the North Carolina Star Rated License program that denotes quality on the basis of staff education, program standards, and compliance with licensing rules. To ensure high-quality experiences for young children, there are several areas in which Forsyth County needs to continue to place emphasis.

- Attracting and retaining teachers by helping them to gain the specialized knowledge required and earn degrees in early childhood education, resulting in improved compensation.
- Using high-quality, research-based and developmentally appropriate standards, curriculum and assessments in all settings;
- Ensuring that programs engage families and support children’s comprehensive needs;

- Building on the use of existing state systems to deliver preschool programs in high-quality child care, Head Start, and school settings.

The following items expand on the above ideals, comprising the necessary components of a high-quality preschool program for all children, and stand as recommendations as Forsyth County moves toward a Universal Pre-K system.

#### Curriculum, Screening, and Assessment Recommendations:

Important to the success of young children in preschool settings is the type of curriculum, screening, and assessments that are provided. Much research supports the use of developmentally appropriate curriculum, screenings, and assessments.

#### Curriculum

Curriculum in preschool settings can be defined as “everything that students learn. It can be implicit or explicit, planned for or spontaneous [and] **play is truly the most important part of a curriculum** (emphasis ours).” (*Study.com, 2016*). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) describes a curriculum for young children as an “organized framework” that delineates the following:

- The content that children are to learn;
- The process through which children achieve the identified curricular goals;
- What teachers do to help children achieve these goals; and
- The context in which teaching and learning occur.” (NAEYC, 2009).

NAEYC also defines various indicators of an effective and appropriate curriculum for young children:

- Children are active and engaged;
- Goals are clear and shared by all;
- Curriculum is evidence-based;
- Valued content is learned through investigation and focused, intentional teaching;
- Curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences;
- Curriculum is comprehensive;
- Professional standards validate the curriculum's subject-matter content; and
- The curriculum is likely to benefit children (NAEYC, 2009)

Based on this established knowledge, the Department of Public Instruction and NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) recommend the following curricula for use within preschool programs:

- Creative Curriculum for Preschool 4th Edition;
- The Empowered Child (Child Time 2nd Edition);
- Exploration with Young Children: Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education;
- High Scope for Preschool;
- Opening the World of Learning;
- Passports: Experiences for Pre-K Success; and
- Tutor Time: Life Smart

### Screening and Assessment

Effective, ethical, appropriate, and reliable screenings and assessments are a fundamental part of a high-quality preschool experience. According to NAEYC's position statement on assessment

(2009), "to best assess young children's strengths, progress, and needs, [educators should] use assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, tied to children's daily activities, supported by professional development, inclusive of families and connected to specific, beneficial purposes."

North Carolina shares these views and has developed criteria and indicators for screening and assessment that support the appropriate use of these following tools:

**Screening** – Developmental screenings assist with identifying children who should be referred for further evaluation or assessment based on concerns in one or more developmental domain. DPI and DCDEE-approved screenings include:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3rd Edition;
- Brigance Early Childhood Screen II or Brigance Head Start Screen, Brigance Preschool Screen II;
- DIAL 3 or DIAL 4 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning);
- Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS).

**Assessment** – There must be an ongoing, formative assessment that allows educators to observe, record, and document what children can do and how they do it. The following are NC Pre-K-approved assessments that are aligned with the *NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development* standards:

- Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, Ages 3-5 and Teaching Strategies GOLD;
- Galileo On-line Assessment System (Galileo Pre-K);
- Highscope Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) (second edition);

- Learning Care System (for use with Tutor Time Life Smart™ and The Empowered Child™ Childtime);
- Work Sampling System (Meisels);
- The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System;
- Highscope Child Observation Record, 2nd Edition;
- Investigator Club (Approved with the stipulation that this is used only with Investigator Club curriculum);
- Teaching Strategies GOLD®; and
- The Work Sampling System, 4th Edition.

### Family Engagement

Meaningful family engagement in children’s early learning supports school readiness and later academic success. It is essential that preschool programs:

- Increase and support family engagement, partnerships, and two-way communication;
- Use an evidence-based Family Engagement Curriculum, such as Parents as Teachers;
- Assign a Family Advocate/Educator to all Pre-K classrooms.

### Additional Recommendations:

The following, additional recommendations relate to quality program as Forsyth County moves forward with plans expand Pre-K resources in our community.

1. Work toward a more consistent and fair compensation system by:
  - Completing a wage compatibility study to determine gaps;
  - Identifying the salary scales of various Pre-K providers; and

- Providing a competitive salary with benefits.
2. Because the center manager’s role is critical to the success of Pre-K programs, it will be important to:
    - Provide leadership training for managers;
    - Ensure managers have early childhood knowledge and experience, preferably having a degree in early childhood education;
    - Ensure managers have Level I, II or III (Level III BS/BA in early childhood or in childhood development); and
    - Establish a mentor and coaching program.
  3. Although training requirements are different within systems, the community should strive to provide common training for all child development staff, including topics such as child abuse and neglect; health and safety; First Aid and CPR; developmentally appropriate practice; and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). All stake- holders must come together to develop a comprehensive collaborative training plan.
  4. Partner with local universities and colleges to:
    - Develop mentoring and coaching programs, similar to teacher mentor programs, co-ops, student teaching, etc.;
    - Engage in continuous improvement processes in order to enhance the early childhood education curriculum preparation program and the relationships among the higher education system and local communities; and
    - Invite Winston-Salem State University, Salem College, UNC Greensboro, and NC A&T to the table to discuss Birth-to-Kindergarten license requirements to ensure consistent expectations as local Pre-K systems provide input to the process for qualifying educators.

## IV. THE WAY FORWARD

This report is a compendium of the critical factors that our community will need to discuss and debate to determine the structure, components, cost, and standards for a universal Pre-K system in Forsyth County. Many issues must be examined in depth if we hope to effectively utilize all the funds available – from Head Start, Title I, CCDF, and Exceptional Children at the federal level; from NC Pre-K and NCPC at the state level; and from parent fees, corporate contributions, and tax revenues at the local level – to create a quality system that will bring the return on investment that our children and community deserve.

### The way forward requires diligent consideration of the following issues:

- **Establishing and meeting standards for high-quality programs.** A single set of standards governing Pre-K providers needs to be established to assure that all children have the same quality experience. Forsyth County parents, educators, and public officials have the necessary information (referenced in this report) to establish a single, harmonized set of standards for Pre-K providers to assure that all children receive a reliable, high-quality experience.
- **Developing a uniform, comprehensive system.** A universal Pre-K system will be established incrementally over the next several years. (See Appendix D for an illustration of a timetable.) At each step the addition of new capacity must take place with the final end of a uniform, comprehensive system in mind. The challenge is twofold: 1) to establish greater programmatic and administrative coherence in the existing system, and 2) to ensure that any expansion of the system incorporates the standards that have been adopted for the universal system. Project Impact provides an opportunity to model how the broader universal
- Pre-K system will be developed. This impending expansion of Pre-K must continue to incorporate the elements that are the hallmark of our county's Pre-K programs, so as to create a single system that assures comparable levels of quality to all children, regardless of the provider.
- **Maintaining a mixed system of public and private providers.** Forsyth County has utilized the multiple sources of public funding for Pre-K programs to craft a mixed system of providers – the public schools, privately run child development centers, and Family Services' Head Start program – that are responsive to the varied needs of families and children. Maintaining a mixed system provides parents with choices that correspond to their varied needs and circumstances.
- **Building System Capacity.** A mixed system of providers is also the best way to meet the demand for the additional facilities needed in a universal Pre-K system. With approximately 3,000 slots to be added no single institution or sector has the necessary capacity. Even meeting the space needs for the 600 slots to be added by Project Impact over the next twelve months will require the involvement of both the school district and community providers. Smart Start of Forsyth County, as part of its mission, is already engaged in assessing providers that could add capacity to the system.
- **Gaining Community-wide Support.** The expansion of the Pre-K system requires community involvement from within the early childhood development field, from business and community leaders, and from parents and community groups. Public awareness and education are essential elements for ensuring that universal Pre-K is universally endorsed across the community.

- **Establishing Uniform Compensation Practices.** We need to strengthen compensation practices so that Pre-K educators – regardless of the size or assets of the organization for which they work – receive reasonably equivalent salaries and benefits. Disparity in compensation creates disruption from staff turnover and talent loss from the system.
- **Involving Families.** The involvement of parents in their child’s Pre-K learning experience is critical, as what happens at home ultimately has a greater impact on a child’s development than what happens in the classroom. A quality Pre-K program includes effective methods of family engagement and participation.
- **Accomplishing Transitions.** Pre-K is not an island. How children and families transition into a Pre-K program affects how children will benefit from their Pre-K experience. How children transition from a Pre-K program into kindergarten determines how that benefit will continue on through the early elementary years.
- **Attaining Diverse Enrollment.** Allowing young children to interact with other children from different backgrounds is a proven value-added in early learning. The peer effect of Pre-K programs that are ethnic and income-integrated have a greater effect in closing achievement gaps.

If the work of the Universal Pre-K Steering Committee has accomplished anything it is to identify how much work remains to be done in order to create a successful universal Pre-K system. The issues raised in this report provide ample material for additional work groups to explore.

Forsyth County has a rare opportunity to do this right. The philanthropic, business, civic, education, and child development sectors are each poised to contribute their expertise and resources to achieve a positive outcome. However, we have much important work before us to strengthen communications and coordination. Only by establishing an integrative planning process will we achieve the high-quality universal Pre-K system envisioned in this report.

To ensure that the investments the community makes to expand Pre-K programs is money well-spent will require a community-wide planning process that includes all the parties committed to the creation of a quality universal Pre-K system. The Universal Pre-K Initiative Steering Committee and all who have contributed to this report are ready and eager to engage in such a process. The goal – our community’s goal – is to establish a Pre-K system in Forsyth County that gives every child the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. Do we owe our children anything less?

## ENDNOTES

- i First Five Year Fund, <http://ffyf.org/2016-poll>.
- ii Heckman, J.J., Moon, S.H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P.A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program, *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1), 1140128
- iii This value represents the *Average Daily Membership* for 2015–16, which underestimates the total enrollment during the year.
- iv [www.ProjectImpact.WS](http://www.ProjectImpact.WS)
- v There is great variance in price across communities and Pre-K markets. Figures range from less than \$7K to more than \$10K per annum. For this paper, we have adopted the figure of \$8.4K cited in ChildCare Aware of America’s “*Parents and the High Cost of Child Care*” report, which details the cost of full-time child care in centers, along with 2014 Median household income from the U.S. Census Bureau.
- vi Bartik, T.J., Gormley, W., Adelstein, S. (2012). Earnings benefits of Tulsa’s Pre-K program for different income groups. *Economics of Education Review*. 31(6), December 2012, 1143-1161
- vii Barnett, Stephen, W., Getting the Facts Right on Pre-K, National Institute for Early Education Research, February, 25, 2013
- viii <http://www.ncacc.org/index.aspx?nid=227>
- ix <https://www.americanprogress.org/series/social-impact-bonds/view>

# APPENDIX A

## Public Funding in Forsyth County Pre-K Classrooms

The tables below provide an overview of the changes in NC Pre-K and Head Start for Pre-K programs in Forsyth County in recent years. Additional state funding is available through NCPC and additional federal funding is available through Title I and CCDF. The fluctuations in number of children served each year demonstrate expansion and contraction in funding as determined by state and federal law makers and appointed officials.

Enhancements were provided using Smart Start scholarship funding in 2010–11 and 2013–14. The majority of enhancement funds in 2010–11 were used to provide family support specialists

for Pre-K classes. This program enhancement was discontinued in 2011–12; only Head Start-supported classes have had access to family support specialists since 2010–11. In 2013–14, the enhancements were used to increase the reimbursement rates to providers. These were one-time only, non-recurring enhancements.

Head Start funding also covers the employment of program specialists in such areas as health and nutrition, mental health and disabilities, curriculum enhancement, recruitment and enrollment, training and professional development, and cultural diversity.

Fiscal Year	NC Pre-K	Total Number of Pre-K children served with State Funding	Smart Start Scholarship Enhancements to State-funded Pre-K in Forsyth County
2010–11	\$3,348,810	711	\$616,260
2011–12	\$3,006,274	568	n/a
2012–13	\$3,735,928	818	n/a
2013–14	\$2,855,949	560	\$222,672
2014–15	\$3,091,033	606	\$169,000
2015–16	\$3,131,177	600	n/a
2016–17	\$3,131,177	626 (enrolled)	n/a
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$22,300,348</b>	<b>4,489</b>	<b>\$1,007,932</b>

Fiscal Year	Head Start Funding for 4-year-old classrooms	Total Number of 4-year-olds served
2011–12	\$3,325,617	407
2012–13	\$3,497,426	425
2013–14	\$3,540,314	453
2014–15	\$3,675,759	441
2015–16	\$3,434,042	412
2016–17	\$3,681,828	434
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$21,154,986</b>	<b>2,572</b>



# APPENDIX B

## Matrix of Program Quality Factors

	<b>Staff Education/ credential Requirements</b>	<b>Facility Specification</b>	<b>Curriculum, Screening, Assessment</b>	<b>Environmen- tal Require- ments</b>	<b>Ongoing Professional Development</b>	<b>Management Requirements</b>
<b>Public Schools</b>	BS/BA B-K Teaching assistants must meet 'No Child Left Behind' standards	Meets school district facility standards	Children are screened prior to entry and ongoing assessments are implemented at least twice a year	Meets school district facility standards (Building and fire, and sanitation codes)	Professional Development is offered throughout the year CEU's are required to maintain licensure	Principal Certification
<b>Head Start</b>	LT-BS/BA ECE T-AAA ECE	35 sq. ft indoor per child 75 sq. ft. outdoor per child Sanitation and fire compliance Must comply with the state and local rules and regulations	Valid and reliable; research based instruments	ECERS	Annual Professional Development Plans  In-services and Pre—service training to increase the knowledge and skill needed to fulfill their job.	BS/BA in ECE and/or business Admin II or III
<b>Licensed Child Care</b>	Goals to reach 5 star depend heavily on Scale scores; however, education requirements are to maintain at least 50% at credentials plus 12 hours for Assistant Teachers and 75% at AA degree or higher	Must maintain sanitation and fire approval Must maintain at 75% compliance history for licensing	Must have a curriculum and evidence lesson plan	Rated license is based on Environmental Rating Scales, compliance history; Staff and Admin education;	Annual training hours required based on staff and admin education level. Playground safety, SIDS, BSAC, First Aide/CPR are required for all Admin and some staff depending on age group	Must have Admin Credentials, License points for education cannot be higher than the Admin educations points, CRC requirements for all staff and Admin (with 3 year re-licensure)
<b>NC Pre-K</b>	Minimum BA degree in ECE or related field Required B-K licensure Assistant teacher requires AA ECE	Comply with state and local rules and regulations	Must be a DC-DEE approved curriculum Several are identified in NCPK Guidelines and Requirements	Must maintain a 4 or 5 Star rated license	Minimum of 15 hours in-services training annually Teachers in private sites must be enrolled in EESLPD for B-K licensure	BS/BA and Admin Level III or Principal Certification

## APPENDIX C

### Current Funding of Pre-K Classrooms, and Implications for a Universal Pre-K System

**There are three primary and two secondary sources of regulated public funding that support the operation of our local Pre-K system. The three primary sources are:**

1. NC Pre-K program, managed by Smart Start of Forsyth County, Inc.
2. Title I program, managed by Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools
3. Head Start program, managed by Family Services, Inc.

**The two secondary sources are:**

1. Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), the federal childcare subsidy program managed by the Forsyth County Department of Social Services
2. The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) family childcare scholarship funds, managed by Smart Start of Forsyth County, Inc.

Across all sources, cost data are normally calculated in terms of a per pupil cost per month (pp/pm) or per pupil/per year (pp/py).

Because the three primary funding sources serve the more than 20% of our four-year-old children, and at a higher average level of regulated quality, we will focus only on the Head Start, NC Pre-K, and Title I supported programs.

**The primary factors in determining the cost of a universal Pre-K program are:**

- Class size = 18 pupils per class;
- Staffing = one teacher and one teacher assistant per class;
- Length of school year = 10 months; and
- Hours of operation = 6.5 hours per day or 8 hours per day.
- DCDEE facility and costs standards for serving four-year-old children.

## **A summary of the current levels of public support to classrooms and implications for a universal Pre-K system:**

### **1. Classrooms supported through NC-Pre-K Program**

#### a. Private organizations in Forsyth County:

- 1) Selected independent and corporate childcare centers receive \$650 pp/pm (\$6,500 pp/py) to cover all of the costs to operate the program, based on a class size of 18 and staffing with a certified teacher and TA. Most private centers also receive \$150 pp/pm from Family Services through its Head Start program.
- 2) Selected Family Services' Head Start facilities receive \$300 pp/pm (\$3,000 pp/py), in addition to federal Head Start base-funding already available to Family Services' through its Head Start program.

#### b. Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools

Selected district schools receive \$473 pp/pm (\$4,730 pp/py), supplemented with Title I, and other school district dollars. It is estimated that the cost of the WS/FCS Pre-K program is closer to \$800pp/pm.

### **2. Classrooms supported through Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools Title I Program**

The Title I Pre-K annual expense is \$6,479 per child, excluding snacks. With snacks it is \$6,704 per child. This average cost includes salary, wages, benefits, and instructional supplies and materials, but does not include the cost of the building.

### **3. Classrooms supported through Family Services, Inc., Head Start Program**

The cost per child in Family Services' Head Start program is approximately \$11,150. This cost covers both classroom expenses and the additional services provided under the Head Start model, i.e., family advocacy/case management; parent, family, and community engagement; nutrition and health; mental health and disabilities, and cultural diversity. Curriculum, enrollment, and professional development also have dedicated staff resources.

### **4. Assuming an age cohort of 4,500 children and 90% enrollment, 4,050 children would be served in a universal Pre-K System.** After subtracting the 1,079 children already served through publicly-funded programs, the remaining 2,971 children that would be enrolled in a universal program at \$8,400 pp/py would require an additional \$24,956,400 in annual funding.

# UNIVERSAL PRE-K IN FORSYTH COUNTY BY 2020

## Sample Timetable and Possible Funding Sources

Period	Phase-in Scenario <sup>^</sup>	Current Total Cost <sup>*</sup>	Living Wage Cost <sup>**</sup>	Funding Sources <sup>***</sup>
<b>Dec. 31, 2016</b>	Current # of children enrolled in quality ECD  1,184 enrolled, 2,866 remaining	\$10.0 million	—	CCDF, NC Pre-K, Head Start, Title I, Project Impact, Parent Fees
<b>Dec. 31, 2017</b>	25% of remaining 4-year-olds  1,900 enrolled, 2,150 remaining	\$16.0 million	\$17.5 million	CCDF, NC Pre-K, Head Start, Parent Fees Title I, Project Impact, Parent Fees
<b>Dec. 31, 2018</b>	25% of remaining 4-year-olds  2,616 enrolled, 1,434 remaining	\$23.0 million	\$25.1 million	CCDF, NC Pre-K, Head Start, Parent Fees, Title I, Project Impact, Sales Tax, Property Tax, Grants, Social Impact Bond
<b>Dec. 31, 2019</b>	25% of remaining 4-year-olds  3,332 enrolled, 718 remaining	\$27.0 million	\$29.5 million	CCDF, NC Pre-K, Head Start, Parent Fees, Title I, Sales Tax, Property Tax, Grants, Social Impact Bonds
<b>Dec. 31 2020</b>	25% of remaining 4-year-olds  4,050 enrolled	\$34.0 million	\$37.1 million	CCDF, NC Pre-K, Head Start, Parent Fees, Title I, Sales Tax, Property Tax, Grants, Social Impact Bonds

<sup>^</sup> Based on maximum projected enrollment of 4,050 4-year-olds.

<sup>\*</sup> Current Cost is based on \$8,400 per child per year.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Living Wage Cost is based on personnel costs calculated at 70% of current cost, with a 13% wage increase.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Funding Sources for the periods ending December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2017 are based on actual sources. Funding for subsequent periods – notably Sales Tax, Property Tax, Grants, and Social Impact Bond – are included to illustrate potential sources of funding.

# STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## Universal Pre-K Initiative

- **Nikki Byers**, Executive Director, Imprints Cares
- **Joe Crocker**, Director, Poor and Needy Division, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust
- **Matt Ellinwood**, Director of the Education and Law Project, North Carolina Justice Center
- **Bob Feikema** (convener), President & CEO, Family Services
- **Sharee Fowler**, Director of the Department of Not-for-Profit Management and Arts Management, Salem College
- **Khari Garvin**, Director, Great Expectations, MDC (for KBR)
- **Tanya McDougal**, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Forsyth County Department of Social Services
- **Eva Phillips**, Ready Schools Coordinator, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
- **Larry Vellani**, Executive Director, Smart Start of Forsyth County, Inc.
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