

THE
PRE·K
PRIORITY

PreKPriority.org



TALKING
POINTS



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The Pre-K Priority Talking Points

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Why is high-quality Pre-K so important?

Pre-K matters. Brain science has confirmed the first five years of life are a time of tremendous physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Pre-K maximizes the ability of children during this time and helps prepare them to enter Kindergarten ready to learn. Studies show that children that attend a high-quality Pre-K program demonstrate gains not only during elementary school but throughout their educational career. This helps reduce the achievement gap.

2

What is meant by high-quality Pre-K, and what are the benefits of high-quality Pre-K for all 4-year-olds in Forsyth County?

High-quality Pre-K incorporates sufficient time (full day, 6.5 hours) in an enriching environment for learning, with well-prepared and supported teachers, small class sizes, low student-teacher ratios, research-based curricula, continual parental engagement, and academic, social, and physical assessments that ensure progress. High-quality Pre-K has shown the following benefits:

- + **STUDENTS** - nurtures academic, social, and emotional development; enhances self-sufficiency; and increases the likelihood of achievement, graduation, and employment
- + **FAMILIES** - lowers the financial burden while allowing families to pursue and hold employment knowing their children are safe and receiving high-quality care
- + **COMMUNITY** - reduces the tax burden associated with special education programs, educational remediation, social supports, and criminal justice; decreases learning achievement gaps; and contributes to a better prepared workforce



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How does Forsyth County compare to other counties both in NC and across the country?

- + Nationwide, fewer than one-third of all 4-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality preschool programs. While approximately 60% of four-year-olds in Forsyth County are enrolled in a licensed Pre-K program, only a limited number incorporate best practices and none of these programs contain all of the characteristics associated with high-quality Pre-K as defined by The Pre-K Priority.
- + Several metro counties in North Carolina (including Buncombe, Durham, and Mecklenburg) have already expanded local funding to create more access to early learning programs. Currently Forsyth County does not have any funding in their budget devoted to Pre-K.

WE HAVE TO DO BETTER.

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What are the challenges for families in terms of access to Pre-K?

In NC, the average annual cost to families of full-day (6.5 hours), center-based care for four-year-olds is \$7,920 compared to the average annual cost of tuition and fees at a public college of \$7,385. While some families can access publicly funded Pre-K, many are not eligible. With a median income of \$46,283 in Forsyth County, childcare is one of the largest monthly expenses for middle-income families in our community, making it a difficult financial choice.

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What is currently being done in Forsyth County to ensure high-quality Pre-K for all?

The Pre-K Priority is a coalition of community individuals and organizations convened by Family Services that has worked over the last 5+ years to advance the goal of Pre-K for all 4-year-old children in Forsyth County. Our aim is to expand our mixed system of Pre-K providers, building on existing programs to ensure greater access, affordability, and quality for all families who want to enroll their child. We have published extensive research toward that end (*Building the Foundation for the Future of Forsyth County* - reports.PreKPriority.org). Family Services is also currently overseeing a community-wide education and engagement campaign and feasibility study being conducted by Forsyth Futures that will be finished in January 2020.

A blend of federal, state, and private funds and resources contributes to Pre-K in our community. These funds are administered by various agencies, initiatives, and non-profits that include DSS, Head Start, Smart Start, NC Pre-K, and WS/FCS. Project Impact, a private individual/corporate led initiative, has pledged \$45M over six years aimed toward reducing achievement gaps from Pre-K through 3rd grade. While significant funds are designated for Pre-K, these resources are not sustainable long term.



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What will it take to make high-quality Pre-K a reality in Forsyth County?

We have work to do and are establishing a path forward. We are grateful to the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, which has provided significant funding for the work of The Pre-K Priority.

Financing a broad, high-quality Pre-K system will include existing funding streams in addition to new revenue sources. Additional funding from a combination of local, state, and federal government sources along with philanthropic support will be needed.

With proper funding, expanding high-quality Pre-K for all children in Forsyth County will require improvements in quality; additional facilities; more qualified and better compensated teachers; and the establishment of an administrative structure to ensure uniform practices, effective evaluation, and positive outcomes.

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What can residents of Forsyth County do to help?

We need the support of citizens, parents, educators, elected officials, business leaders, faith communities, and local activists to help.

Spread the word about the benefits of Pre-K for children, families, and our community via social media and with your circle of influence utilizing The Pre-K Priority Communications Toolkit.

ADVOCATE FOR PRE-K ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL 4-YEAR-OLDS BY:

- + **SIGNING** the Pre-K Pledge - PreKPriority.org/#get-involved
- + **VOLUNTEER** at events that help promote The Pre-K Priority in our community.

Find more information by visiting PreKPriority.org
Engage with us now!

