

Forsyth County Early Childhood Education Task Force Report June 2022

THE PRE•K PRIORITY



All children have the right
to equitable learning opportunities
that help them achieve their full potential
in school, work, and life.

Forsyth County: Early Childhood Education Task Force

Commitment to Families, Children, and the Community

We commit to working to develop affordable, high-quality Pre-K experiences that are inclusive, joyful, create a love of learning, and build positive identity.

We commit to eliminating disparities and achieving equity by providing all children with the resources they need to be ready to succeed in school.

We commit to supporting programs that are culturally responsive and celebrate home languages, cultures, and traditions.

We commit to ensuring access to high-quality programs that are in accord with the values and needs of each family.

We commit to incorporating the knowledge and lived experience of parents as experts on their children and communities into Pre-K programs, processes, and systems.

We commit to going beyond what's been done in the past by adopting new, creative, and effective ideas to enable us to achieve our vision of a community in which all children are able to succeed in school and in life.

TASK FORCE PURPOSE

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Force was established in the spring of 2021 to help determine recommendations and create a plan for the implementation of a Pre-K system in Forsyth County to provide all families with the opportunity to enroll their children in a high-quality program. The creation of the Task Force was supported by resolutions from the Forsyth County Commissioners, the City of Winston-Salem City Council, and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) Board of Education (Appendix A). The resolutions came in response to a public education campaign organized by the local Pre-K Priority (PKP) initiative during 2020-21. The campaign garnered Declarations of Support from 60 local organizations and 1500+ individual Pre-K Pledge signatures requesting the formation of a local Task Force to develop both a near-term and long-term plan for increasing the availability of high-quality Pre-K programs in Forsyth County.

The ECE Task Force was time-limited to one year. While the PKP had established evidence-based standards, components, and practices of high-quality Pre-K to be incorporated into local programs, Task Force members were expected to use their expertise to review and expand upon the findings and recommendations of the PKP and develop and facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive plan for expanding access to high-quality Pre-K.



RATIONALE FOR THE TASK FORCE

Numerous research findings and scientific studies demonstrate the importance and benefit of positive early childhood experiences on brain development. High-quality Pre-K has been demonstrated to be an effective means of enhancing the well-being of children while expressly increasing reading readiness and proficiency.

For many years, a substantial number of children in Forsyth County have entered school lacking prerequisite skills that support reading attainment, and as a result, are challenged to achieve reading proficiency by third grade, which is a strong indicator of future success.¹ Furthermore, there are significant disparities in reading readiness and proficiency that disproportionality affect children of color and children from families with low incomes. This statistic is documented in a report from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which found that in 2018-19 over 60% of African American and Hispanic/Latino third graders in Forsyth County were not reading at grade level.²

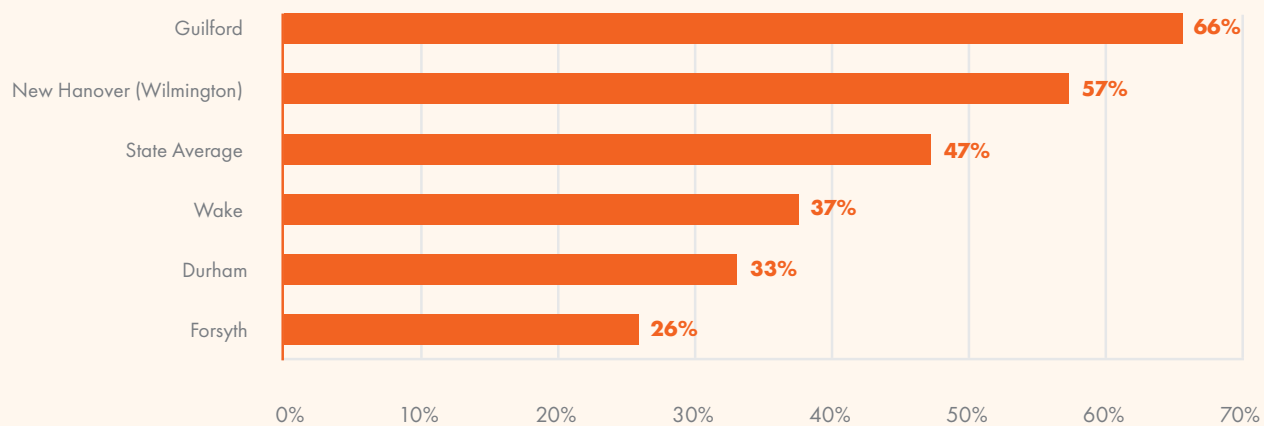
Ensuring access to high-quality Pre-K for 4-year-olds is based on the principle of equity and is proven to be one of the most sound educational investments the public can make. Children who attend high-quality Pre-K perform better on standardized achievement tests in reading and math, exhibit more positive behaviors in the classroom, are more likely to graduate from high school, continue their education, and be more productive and responsible as adults.³ High-quality Pre-K helps reduce costs for special education and grade retention in the near-term and the use of government assistance and encounters with the judicial system in the long-term.³ Additionally, Pre-K programs support working parents and help grow maternal employment rates by providing high quality, beneficial child care while nurturing social-emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical development. Since high-quality programs screen for nutritional and developmental delays that require medical intervention, children and their families are also able to receive early care and support services.

A recent Duke University study found that children living in a North Carolina county where the NC Pre-K program was sufficiently funded demonstrated better academic outcomes.⁴ However, the rate of enrollment of eligible children in Forsyth County in the NC Pre-K program is among the lowest in the state, especially compared to other populous, metropolitan counties (as evidenced by the graph on the next page). Similarly, the market rate (reimbursement) paid to 5-star, licensed centers that receive child care subsidy payments is significantly less in Forsyth County compared to other metro counties (note graph on the next page). The revelation of these disparities in public funding further motivated the formation of the Task Force.

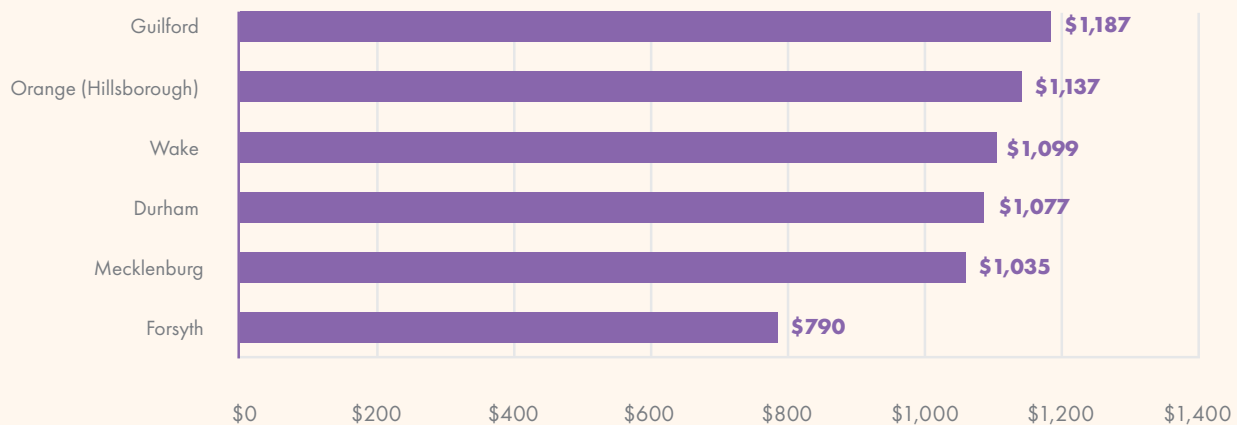
The elimination of disparities has been a core goal of the PKP initiative. Gaining feedback from communities that regularly experience barriers to Pre-K is central to achieving that goal. Beginning in early 2021, the PKP formed intentional partnerships with Action4Equity and Latino Community Services, two grassroots groups that received funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust for community-based Pre-K work. The participation of these partners on the Task Force, as well as, the Hispanic League and long-time supporter Imprints Cares, helped to prevent “band-aid” interventions and avoid siloed or isolated efforts. A subcommittee of the Quality & Evaluation Work Group was convened by Imprints Cares during the Task Force process to focus on parent and family engagement and specifically identify the root causes of barriers to Pre-K for working parents.



Percentage of Eligible Children Enrolled in NC Pre-K Program (2019–20)



Market Rate: Five-Star Centers, 3- to 5-yr-olds (2015)



TASK FORCE STRUCTURE & MEMBERSHIP

The structure and membership of the Task Force were created in conjunction with the ongoing endeavors of the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee and its four established Work Groups: Quality & Evaluation, Workforce Education & Training; Advocacy & Funding; and System Implementation & Administration. A document was developed to outline and guide the working relationship between the ECE Task Force and these associated groups. The members of the Task Force and the Steering Committee and the conveners of the Work Groups are included in Appendices B, C, and D.

The PKP Steering Committee served as the primary source of information for the Task Force on a broad range of subjects, including Pre-K and early childhood education research, best practices and standards of high-quality Pre-K programs, program costs, funding methods, and program evaluation. As such, the Task Force closely coordinated its work with the PKP Steering Committee and the four Work Groups in terms of information, research, and recommendations over the course of the year. Importantly, a continuous feedback loop was incorporated to foster connectivity and transparency; the communication diagram is included in Appendix E.

Task Force members were appointed by a selection committee comprised of the PKP convener, Bob Feikema, CEO of Family Services; two PKP Steering Committee members, Claudia Barrett, Executive Director of Imprints Cares, and Meredith Flowe, Executive Director of The Centers for Exceptional Children; Denise D. Adams, Mayor Pro-Tempore of the City of Winston-Salem; Gloria Whisenhunt, Forsyth County Commissioner; and Marilyn Parker, member of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) Board of Education. A diverse and inclusive set of stakeholders were recruited to serve as the 31 members of the Task Force. Three parent members with differing backgrounds and Pre-K experiences were essential voices in the group. In the interest of mission fidelity, 10 members of the PKP Steering Committee were selected to serve on the Task Force.

Expectations and responsibilities of the Task Force members included reviewing materials in advance of meetings, active meeting participation, and sharing of perspectives and ideas. Task Force members were highly encouraged to join at minimum one of the four established Work Groups, which met at least monthly. Work Group engagement allowed Task Force members to become familiar with the details of a particular Pre-K topic, provide relevant input, and offer collaborative support from their respective sector of the community.

An Executive Committee of the Task Force was established to identify issues and prepare the agenda for meetings. The Executive Committee consisted of County Commissioner Don Martin, the Task Force Chair; Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Superintendent Tricia McManus, the Task Force Vice-Chair; Ronda Tatum, Deputy County Manager (Retired), and Mark Owens, President of Greater Winston-Salem, Inc., both at-large members of the Task Force; Bob Feikema, the PKP convener; Kellie Easton, Executive Director of Action4Equity; and Rémona Brooks, a community representative.



TASK FORCE PROCESS

The Task Force approach was collaborative and equity-focused with the intention of building common ground, sharing resources, and working together for the best outcome for all Forsyth County children. As such, one of the first agenda items during the inaugural orientation session was consideration of adopting a Statement of Commitment to Families, Children, and the Community. The statement was collaboratively developed over the first two months of Work Group and PKP Steering Committee meetings and then was reviewed and adopted by the Task Force at its September 2021 meeting. The final version is included at the beginning and end of this report.

Six meetings of the Task Force were slated to occur between June 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022. However, only five meetings were held in total for various reasons related to timelines and goals of the Work Groups. The first three meetings were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic and garnered positive attendance and engagement. An interim report was issued in January 2022 to provide a comprehensive, mid-year update. The April 2022 meeting was held in person at the WS/FCS Education Building to review and provide feedback on the proposed recommendations. The fifth and final meeting on June 23, 2022, was a hybrid setting that included both in-person and virtual attendees.

The Task Force began with a list of 12 goals (at right) to guide its work. These goals directly aligned with the responsibilities assigned to the four Work Groups. In hindsight, the 12-goal list was ambitious for a yearlong effort. Fortunately, the Task Force process and timeline coincided with an opportunity to apply for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from Forsyth County, which enabled a number of the goals to be realized within the context of a model project. An in-depth overview of the extent to which the goals were accomplished is provided in Appendix F, along with plans to address those still to be achieved.

ECE TASK FORCE GOALS

- 1** Establish an implementation timeline for expanding opportunities for families in Forsyth County to enroll their children in a high-quality Pre-K program.
- 2** Establish priorities for the order in which families will be served at each stage in an incremental expansion of Pre-K programs.
- 3** Create a streamlined system that pays special attention to equity.
- 4** Maintain a mixed system of high-quality Pre-K providers that honors parent choice and the diverse cultures and priorities of families.
- 5** Ensure that evidence-based practices and standards associated with high-quality Pre-K programs are included in the Forsyth County system.
- 6** Develop a plan for obtaining funding from public and private sources at the federal, state, and local level sufficient to support an expanded, high-quality Pre-K system.
- 7** Identify effective and efficient methods for managing, administering, and evaluating the Pre-K system.
- 8** Establish means and methods that provide for the recruitment, retention, and development of a well-trained and adequately compensated Pre-K workforce.
- 9** Integrate stakeholder feedback to ensure that community, family, teacher, and provider voices and wisdom are incorporated in the plan to expand Pre-K opportunities.
- 10** Assess the impact of Pre-K expansion on the overall (birth to age 5) system of early childhood education/development resources in Forsyth County.
- 11** Make recommendations to elected officials, Pre-K providers, and civic institutional leaders regarding policies that affect the quality, funding, implementation, management/administration, and evaluation of an expanded Pre-K system in Forsyth County.
- 12** Create dialogue within the existing structure of businesses and learning institutions to formally support a structure to grow a comprehensive early childhood education system.

Task Force Recommendations



The 19 recommendations outlined in this section are a brief summary of the full versions that were submitted and ultimately adopted by the Task Force. The complete version of each recommendation can be found at PreKPriority.org/ece-recommendations. Recommendations were developed through the PKP Work Groups during the course of the year. Task Force members collectively discussed and offered feedback on the recommendations at the April 22 meeting utilizing the World Café group dialogue method. That information was shared with the

PKP Steering Committee, and after minor modifications and additions, the recommendations were adopted at the final Task Force meeting on June 23, 2022. The recommendations are intended to provide a roadmap for structuring an accessible, equitable, and affordable high-quality Pre-K system for Forsyth County. They proved to be of immediate utility in preparing the application for ARPA funding. (See the next section.) While the final and longer-range implementation plan is not yet fully developed, the Task Force's involvement has generated momentum to advance the work to the next stage.

Recommendations

1

Consistent and equitable compensation for Pre-K Lead and Assistant Teachers

Institute a system where all licensed and credentialed Pre-K Teachers and Assistant Teachers are compensated equitably regardless of the program type (private child care, public school, Head Start, etc.).

Ensure the system correlates with the Living Wage Calculator for Forsyth County.

2

Align Teacher Credentialing and Licensure Requirements

Lead Pre-K Teachers ideally have a Birth-to-Kindergarten Education (BKE) License* and at minimum have a bachelor degree in a related area and specialized training in early childhood education, and/or a BKE add-on license.

Assistant Teachers ideally have an Associate Degree in Early Childhood or hold a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential.

*Note that the recommendation is subject to the more stringent credentialing (BKE license) if the public program guidelines (i.e., NC Pre-K) require that of Lead Teachers.

3

Address and Reduce Barriers to Pre-K for Families

Enrollment process: streamlined and supportive, online application (in process currently).

Consider current barriers to enrollment and how to reduce the issues related to eligibility requirements.

Strengthen communication between service provider networks.

Form strategic partnerships with pediatricians, faith groups, and others to leverage existing messaging resources.

Explore policies with a family-centered lens before implementation.

Hispanic/Latino families (and refugee communities): area of focus and concern addressing specific and unique barriers.

4

Family Support Specialist Position (Focused on Family Engagement)

Create a liaison position that facilitates the communication with families, teacher/classroom, etc., to advocate and assist as a resource across a multitude of needs. Ideally, one specialist to represent across every two classrooms.

5

Incorporate health-related screenings, formative assessments, and developmental screenings for all Pre-K programs

Health-related Screenings

1. Health/physical
2. Dental screening
3. Vision Check
4. Hearing screening

Formative Assessment

(used to monitor student learning, provide ongoing feedback used by instructors to improve teaching, and by students to improve their learning) Require Pre-K providers to use Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Development Screening

Require Pre-K providers to use Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and /or DIAL-4 for the developmental assessment.

6

Pre-K Transitions Support

Create opportunities for all Pre-K providers to develop and implement high-quality, comprehensive, and coordinated transition plans for children to enter and exit Pre-K.

Ensure on-demand translation services.

7/8

Evaluation Framework & Data Hub (Evaluation of the System, Child, and Family Outcomes)

Develop, fund, and implement a comprehensive evaluation plan to facilitate ongoing data-driven decision-making re: Pre-K issues in Forsyth County. Link with data hub recommendation.

Regularly collect, analyze, and share data across the Forsyth County Pre-K landscape and share child-specific information with the WS/FCS upon entry into Kindergarten through an integrated data system (consider in conjunction with the work Forsyth Futures is currently doing with Smart Start of Forsyth County (SSFC) as well as incorporation of the current WS/FCS data-sharing agreement).

9

Monitoring of Classrooms & Programs (for QRIS Licensing and Evaluation Compliance and Enhancement Opportunities)

Strengthen monitoring to better identify sites/programs at risk for non-compliance and provide technical assistance/training to address at-risk areas.

Determine how best to ensure new program standards are being met.

10

Demographics Focus (Classroom Environments)

Create more diverse Pre-K classrooms for income, race, and ethnicity.

11

Streamline Quality Curricula & Tools

Consider utilizing Creative Curriculum in all high-quality Pre-K classrooms (currently used in all publicly-funded sites). Explore funding supports and resources for private centers.

Ensure a robust writing component is included in daily classroom practice with the Creative Curriculum: including individual, teacher guided, modeled, and small groups.

12

Professional Development & Technical Assistance

Develop a framework that ensures a minimum requirement of ongoing Professional Development and Technical Assistance provided to all teaching and administrative staff (minimums further outlined in full recommendation submission).

Consider integration of all participating programs to use the WS/FCS Kick Up platform to maintain tracking of resources and participation.



Recommendations *(cont.)*

13

Coaching Resources

Provide ongoing weekly or monthly coaching sessions for Pre-K Teachers and Assistants that involve a feedback loop, personal professional planning, and goal setting.

14

Scholarship & Stipend Support for Students and Professionals in Continuing Education/Completing Credentialing

Provide scholarship opportunities and stipend support for students and professionals to continue their education and complete higher credentialing.

15

Creation and Support of Career Pathway from High School to College

Support the collaborative and ongoing communication between WS/FCS' Career Technical Education department, Forsyth Technical Community College, and Winston-Salem State University to align career pathways for students at all levels of ECE advancement and for professionals in the field seeking higher credentials.

16

Teacher Retention Bonus

Provide retention bonuses to incentivize teachers to remain in a program/site and in the ECE field, to reduce turn over and increase the number of credentialed professionals in ECE.

17

Equity Manager for the Pre-K System

Prioritize and make a commitment to equity in an ongoing way by funding a position that creates and manages an equity policy and action plan for the overall Pre-K system.

18

Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)/Star Rating Requirement

Determine the cost of achieving 4- or 5-star rating as a prerequisite for a Forsyth County licensed center/site/program to be eligible to receive local Pre-K funding resources.

Create a pathway for centers/sites that currently do not have a 4- or 5-star rating to meet the criteria via a Memorandum of Agreement/commitment to improve to specific star rating by a predetermined time along with an action plan. Designate funding to help support these steps to increase star-rating/quality.

Advocate for the addition of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) observation instrument (to the state QRIS) to assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions.

19

Advocacy Focus

Activate an Advocacy Campaign aimed at four legislative priorities in 2022-23:

1. Expansion of NC Pre-K program slots
2. Increase rate of reimbursement per NC Pre-K program slot
3. Increase market rate for child care subsidy
4. Adoption of the Leandro settlement



American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Grant

It was recognized at the start of the planning process that an opportunity would become available in the spring of 2022 to apply for federal ARPA funding from Forsyth County. An ARPA Application Team was formed in mid-May 2022 that included both Task Force members and PKP-related individuals. The application deadline was June 10, with a decision expected in the fall of 2022. If approved, the grant will provide funding over a two-year period and is obligated to be spent by December 2025.

The process of preparing the grant for submission required consideration of various administrative models and a determination of which components of high-quality Pre-K would be included in the proposal. The challenge of working more collaboratively was encountered and addressed, ultimately resulting in consensus on the best method to manage and administer the project. With a short timeline of approximately six weeks, the group of 12-15 people met weekly and coalesced around five key goals:

1
Decide who would physically submit the ARPA application

2
Establish who would gather information and write specific pieces of the ARPA application

3
Determine prioritization of recommendations to be included in the application

4
Settle on which organizations would provide the programmatic services outlined in the recommendations to be included

5
Determine how many classrooms would be included

ARPA APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Initially the ARPA Application Team favored submitting the application as a horizontal framework with the PKP serving as the umbrella organization representing all agencies involved in the effort. However, important details related to submission criteria (DUNS number, registered 501C3 status, etc.) complicated a horizontal format as the PKP was not an established nonprofit. There was also the issue of what entity would assume the fiscal oversight of the grant – would that responsibility fall to the County or the agency ultimately submitting the application on behalf of the PKP? Following extensive discussion, the consensus was that SSFC would submit the application based on its capacity, knowledge and experience administering ECE-related grant/public funding. With that, SSFC agreed to function as the primary fiscal agent for the overall grant, with the stipulation that all funded partners sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining their programmatic service component and the associated responsibilities. To equitably impact the current system, the group decided to focus on supporting a range of high-quality classroom practices delivered by key partners, across a model cohort of 30 existing classrooms over the two-year funding period. SSFC Development Director Marvin Fulwood and Pre-K Priority Project Manager Leslie Mullinix gathered the information required for the application and prepared the grant for submission.

Prioritization of Recommendations

Both the Task Force and the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee conducted exercises to prioritize recommendations. Based on these exercises, the Steering Committee identified the most important recommendations, which are indicated — along with the organizations that will implement them — with an asterisk (*) in the next section. As the proposed budget and framework developed, a majority of the recommendations were able to be incorporated into the application. It is important to note

that not all 30 classrooms will require the full slate of programmatic components planned for implementation; the classrooms that already meet particular quality standards using their current public funding will not require grant funds to meet that standard. For this reason, the current standards of each participating classroom will be assessed in order to accurately allocate the programmatic services for the two-year ARPA funding.



Classrooms in the Model Cohort

An equity lens was used to assess funding needs, access to resources, and potential evaluation protocols in order to determine the composition of the 30 classrooms. The group agreed that many classrooms located in private/independent centers do not receive public funding and consequently struggle to meet high-quality standards, and therefore need the most support. Furthermore, many of these classrooms primarily serve children that are disproportionality families of color and that have low incomes. For that reason, the decision was made to allocate 14 of the 30 classrooms to this sector. To ensure that all sectors of the Pre-K landscape were included for evaluation purposes and equity considerations, the remainder of classrooms were appointed as outlined at right, taking into account the current amount of public funding each receive. The method for selecting the specific classrooms is to be determined, but will include location assessment to ensure that disproportionately impacted communities are prioritized in the selection process.

Private and/or independent centers without public-funding:

14 classrooms

NC Pre-K classrooms in community centers:

8 classrooms

Head Start Centers:

4 classrooms

WS/FCS:

4 classrooms



Organizations to Provide ARPA Programmatic Services

The ARPA application was developed with consideration given to those organizations that currently offer the proposed services. The team assessed current capacity, infrastructure, and areas of expertise in determining how these components could best be delivered in the two-year period, along with the willingness of agencies to participate in this collaborative effort. The partner agencies and the services they will provide are as follows:

1 *Coaching Support & Resources: Smart Start of Forsyth County (SSFC)

Coordination and delivery of licensed Early Childhood Education (ECE) Coaches to provide one-to-one support and related resources to Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants in the 30 model classrooms.

Outcome: Improved delivery of early childhood pedagogy will improve the transition into kindergarten to support long-term success through the third grade

Outcome: Higher teacher satisfaction

2 Retention Bonus for Teachers: SSFC

Incentive based payments for Pre-K Lead Teachers and Assistant Teachers that remain in a program/site on a year-to-year basis (amount to be aligned with WS/FCS retention bonuses)

Outcome: Increase the retention of teachers in the classroom for the next school year and increase teacher satisfaction ratings

3 *Salary Equity for Teachers: SSFC

Consistent and equitable compensation for Pre-K Teachers and Assistant Teachers within the 30-classroom model (based on credentials and years of experience) through a supplement of their current salary to attain parity with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Salary Schedule.

Outcome: Increase retention of teachers in the classroom and increase teacher satisfaction ratings

Outcome: Increased number of teaching professionals earn higher credentials

4 Tuition support/scholarship opportunities and stipends: SSFC

Coordination and delivery of scholarship and tuition funding for students and professionals in the ECE field that are continuing or returning to institutions of higher learning to obtain higher professional credentials through an accredited institution such as Forsyth Technical Community College, Winston-Salem State University (or other comparable program).

Outcome: Increased number of teaching professionals earn higher credentials

5 *Family Engagement via Advocates/Specialists: Family Services

Trained family engagement specialists designated within the cohort classrooms in WS/FCS, NC Pre-K, and independent center classrooms to support parents and the whole family by using the evidence-based family engagement model employed by the Head Start program.

Outcome: Increase family satisfaction with programming (self-reported)

Outcome: Support transitions and increase enrollment of students prepared for kindergarten

Outcome: Overall improved family wellbeing (self-reported)



6 *Professional Development: Child Care Resource Center

Structured professional development courses and trainings (at least 15 hours annually), aligned with coaching assessments, will boost teachers' skills, fidelity, and confidence in delivering high-quality care and instruction.

Outcome: Lead and Assistant Teachers will demonstrate increased skills and improved knowledge

7 Translation Services: Latino Community Services

Translation services to support English language learners and their families, especially during enrollment periods and in community engagement activities across the county. Assist with translation in the broader Pre-K landscape including county-wide enrollment fairs and similar community-based activities.

Outcome: Increased number of Hispanic/Latino families enrolled in Pre-K and Kindergarten

Outcome: Improved parental involvement and trust/connectivity of/to educational intuitions

8 *Equity focus within the Pre-K system: WS/FCS

In association with the school district's Office of Equity and Accountability, a dedicated resource will focus on Pre-K to assess the status of equity practices across the current ECE landscape, apply an equity lens to the practices and policies within the 30-classroom cohort, as well as promote and support sustainable equity practices in Pre-K classrooms system wide.

Outcome: Equity assessment of current Pre-K ecosystem

Outcome: Identification and goal setting for an equitable Pre-K system

9 *Integrated Data System: Forsyth Futures

Coordination, collection, and streamlining of data currently housed in disparate systems across various Pre-K providers. Collaboration with the selected evaluator to determine methods and instruments to report outcomes aligned with the measurables specified to monitor the program's success that will include data from and about teachers, centers, and children and families participating in the model cohort.

Outcome: Measures of program success and the collaborative alignment solutions to share data across disparate systems

10 *Evaluation of the Model Cohort

An RFP process will be utilized to select a project evaluator, consistent with an evaluation framework that incorporates best practices and evidence-based methodologies to analyze the model cohort program's progress, as well as, the teachers, centers, and children and family participants.

Outcome: Understand implementation, program quality, program impacts, and detailed information about the model/cohort Pre-K program and those it serves

Outcome: Provide evaluation information (stated in the prior outcome) specific to the select settings (and classrooms within settings) that are representative of the population

In short, ARPA funding will help provide a roadmap for scaling high-quality Pre-K services and resources to the full, Forsyth County Pre-K landscape. Implementation of the model for two years will bring high-quality Pre-K standards and learning environments to 540 children and their families, 30 lead teachers, and 30 Assistant Teachers and demonstrate the capability of our local resources to provide these services within a collaborative framework. The ability to sustain and expand the services financially beyond 2024 will rely on the demonstrated success of the program and the commitment and support of the Forsyth County Commissioners, as well as the broader community's recognition that high-quality Pre-K can significantly improve the wellbeing of children and families.

Next Steps

The Task Force's year of work concluded with the adoption of 19 recommendations relevant to creating a high-quality Pre-K system in Forsyth County and the submission of the ARPA application. These are milestones that raise the PKP initiative to a new level of impact. While the two-year ARPA project actualizes the equitable implementation of high-quality standards for a cohort of classrooms, the achievement of the ultimate goal is far from complete. It will require strategic collaboration, ongoing monitoring, and course correction to scale those standards to all Pre-K classrooms in Forsyth County and further expand the system. Accordingly, the ECE Task Force calls attention to the importance of:

Transforming the PKP Steering Committee to renew commitment and mobilize participation;

Clarifying the new PKP strategic plan to meet the goals of great outcomes for all involved; and

Sharing this work with the community to gain broad input as the process moves forward.

The PKP Steering Committee will continue to serve as the primary convener to strategize how best to fulfill the complete list of adopted recommendations, namely, by addressing several items that are not explicitly included in the ARPA funding. Those specific items include:

Developing an advocacy plan related to increased state funding

Addressing barriers to Pre-K encountered by local families

Streamlining transitions to kindergarten

Supporting private providers seeking to increase quality standards

Engaging the business community to support training and retention of a qualified workforce

These matters will coincide with the responsibility of monitoring and supporting the progress of the ARPA grant. The PKP Steering Committee will oversee these efforts and develop focused work teams to address specific areas.

To operate successfully and achieve these goals during the next several years, the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee must function as a collaborative, interdisciplinary-based coalition that welcomes divergent viewpoints while keeping sight of the primary goal. A realignment of the Steering Committee and the overall initiative is planned for the fall of 2022 to support a renewed culture of cooperation as the PKP enters this next stage. It will be critical to have the participation and active support of institutional leaders from the Task Force, as well as new stakeholders, to strengthen the collective advocacy required to scale a high-quality Pre-K system.



RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE IN FORSYTH COUNTY

WHEREAS the Winston-Salem City Council, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education and the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners believe that high-quality pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) education enables our children to succeed in school, work, and life; and

WHEREAS ensuring access to high-quality Pre-K for 4-year-olds has proven to be one of the soundest educational investments the public can make, providing demonstrated, significant, long-term savings on the costs of special education, grade retention, welfare, and crime; and

WHEREAS during their K–12 years and beyond, children who attend high-quality Pre-K perform better on standardized achievement tests in reading and math, exhibit more positive behaviors in the classroom, and are more likely to graduate from high school, continue their education and be more productive and responsible as adults; and

WHEREAS local organizations have formed the Pre-K Priority committee whose mission is to educate, engage, and mobilize the public and secure the commitment of civic leaders to support the establishment of a high-quality system of Pre-K programs available to all 4-year-olds in Forsyth County; and

WHEREAS the Pre-K Priority has assessed Forsyth County's current and future capacity for providing high quality Pre-K and has established evidence-based standards, components, and practices of high-quality Pre-K to be incorporated into local programs; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Winston-Salem, in coordination with the Forsyth County Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, does hereby agree to form a Community Early Childhood Education Task Force (Task Force) to lead our community in developing a plan for ensuring that all of Forsyth County's children have access to high-quality Pre-K programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Task Force plan will include:

- a) Methods for coordinating the Pre-K programs provided by private and public providers to ensure that parent choice and equity are maintained through a mixed system of high-quality Pre-K providers;
- b) Recommendations for the effective and efficient management, administration, and evaluation of the Pre-K system;
- c) Recommendations for expanding Pre-K in Forsyth County, including establishing priorities for the order in which families will be served in an incremental expansion of Pre-K programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Task Force members will be identified by a Selection Committee whose membership will be comprised of three members selected by the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee and three representatives, one each from County government, City government, and the Board of Education, in consultation with elected officials, civic leaders, and community groups by March 31, 2021, and membership on the Task Force will represent all important stakeholder groups and will reflect the diversity of our community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Task Force will report on its progress to the elected bodies quarterly and deliver a plan for expanding.

Appendix B

FORSYTH COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE (2021-22)

Chair

Don Martin, Vice Chair
Forsyth County Board of Commissioners

Vice Chair

Tricia McManus, Superintendent
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Early Childhood Education

Claudia Barrett, Executive Director
Imprints Cares

Rémona Ramsey-Brooks, Facilitator of
the Family, Friends, and Neighbor Caregivers
Child Care Resource Center

Dean Clifford, Principal
Clifford Consulting

Louis Finney, Chief Executive Officer
Smart Start Forsyth County

Sabrina Hinton, Owner/Operator
North Point & TLC Learning Academies

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Nicolette Grant, Chief Academic Officer
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Malishai Woodbury, Chair
Board of Education,
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Higher Education

Cassaundra El-Amin, Professor Emerita
Winston-Salem State University

Stephanie Lackey, Program Coord.,
Early Childhood Education
Forsyth Technical Community College

Kim Pemberton, Interim Chair of Education,
Winston-Salem State University

Parents

Yara Flores, Parent of Child Enrolled in Pre-K

Kristy Hairston, Parent of Child Enrolled in Pre-K
Forsyth Family Power

Quamekia Shavers, Parent of Child Enrolled in Pre-K
Forsyth Family Power

Business

Don Flow, Chairman & CEO
Flow Automotive Companies

Mark Owens, President & CEO
Greater Winston-Salem, Inc.

Faith

Paul Robeson Ford, Minister

Chuck Spong, Executive Director
Love Out Loud

Healthcare

Kathy Poehling, Professor of Pediatrics,
Director of Pediatric Population Health
Wake Forest Baptist Health & WF School of Medicine

Chad Setliff, Senior Vice President, President & COO
Novant Health Forsyth Medical Center

Community Organizations

Nigel Alston, Executive Director
North Carolina Black Repertory Company

Iris Cole, Board President
Hispanic League

Kellie Easton, Executive Director
Action4Equity

Regina Hall, Executive Director
Boston-Thurmond United

Derwin Montgomery, Director of
Government Relations, North Carolina
American Cancer Society

Odette Sanchez, Executive Director
Latino Community Services

Government

Barbara Burke, Council Member
City of Winston-Salem

Ronda Tatum, Deputy County Manager
Forsyth County (Retired)

Human Services

Bob Feikema, President & CEO
Family Services (Retired)

Debbie Wilson, Chief Impact Officer
United Way of Forsyth County

Appendix C
**PRE-K PRIORITY STEERING
COMMITTEE MEMBERS (2021-22)**

Jenna Barnes

MDC, Activating Agency for KBR's Great Expectations

Claudia Barrett

Imprints Cares

Teresa Beam

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Kelley Bendheim

NC Department of Public Instruction

Rémona Brooks

Community Leader/Latino Community Services

Kellie Easton

Action4Equity

Bob Feikema

Family Services (Retired)

Louis Finney

Smart Start of Forsyth County

Meredith Flowe

The Centers for Exceptional Children

Nicolette Grant

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Sabrina Hinton

TLC Learning Academy & Northpoint Learning Academy

Katura Jackson

Child Care Resource Center

Micha James

Family/Community Representative

Kesa Jessup

Family/Community Representative

Tash Lane

The Forsyth Promise

Tonya Monteiro

Love Out Loud

Leslie Mullinix

Pre-K Priority

Kim Pemberton

Winston-Salem State University

Doug Pungert

NC Pre-K Program Committee

Odette Sanchez

Latino Community Services

Trina Stephens

MDC, Activating Agency for KBR's Great Expectations

Shenell Thompson

Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

Elizabeth White

Forsyth County Department of Social Services

Paula Wilkins

Project Impact

Appendix D

PRE-K PRIORITY WORK GROUPS

Consistent with current and previous practice, the Pre-K Priority Work Groups provided expertise, information, and recommendations to the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee throughout the year. The Steering Committee was responsible for conveying that information to the Task Force. Work Group conveners and members also attended Task Force meetings for in depth presentation of information/recommendations within their area of expertise. Work Groups for 2021-22 included:

System Implementation & Administration

Convener: Louis Finney, Smart Start of Forsyth County

Develop options for how an expanded Pre-K system can best be implemented, managed, and administered. The Work Group will consider the feasibility findings, the current system for enrolling children in publicly-funded Pre-K programs, prioritization of populations in an incremental scale-up, and models that other communities have created to manage expanded Pre-K systems.

Workforce Education & Training

Convener: Tabitha McAllister, Smart Start of Forsyth County

Determine and carry out PKP Report recommendations that can be implemented in the near term while developing longer-range plans for those recommendations that entail major changes in how Pre-K educators are recruited, trained, and supported.

Quality & Evaluation

Co-Conveners: Kellie Easton, Action4Equity & Tasia Wilson, Love Out loud

Review recommendations and findings of the PKP report and recommend standards and best practices to ensure high-quality programs. Develop a program evaluation model/plan to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of an expanded, mixed-provider system. Establish methods for assessing the achievement of defined outcomes.

Advocacy & Funding

Convener: Katura Jackson, Child Care Resource Center

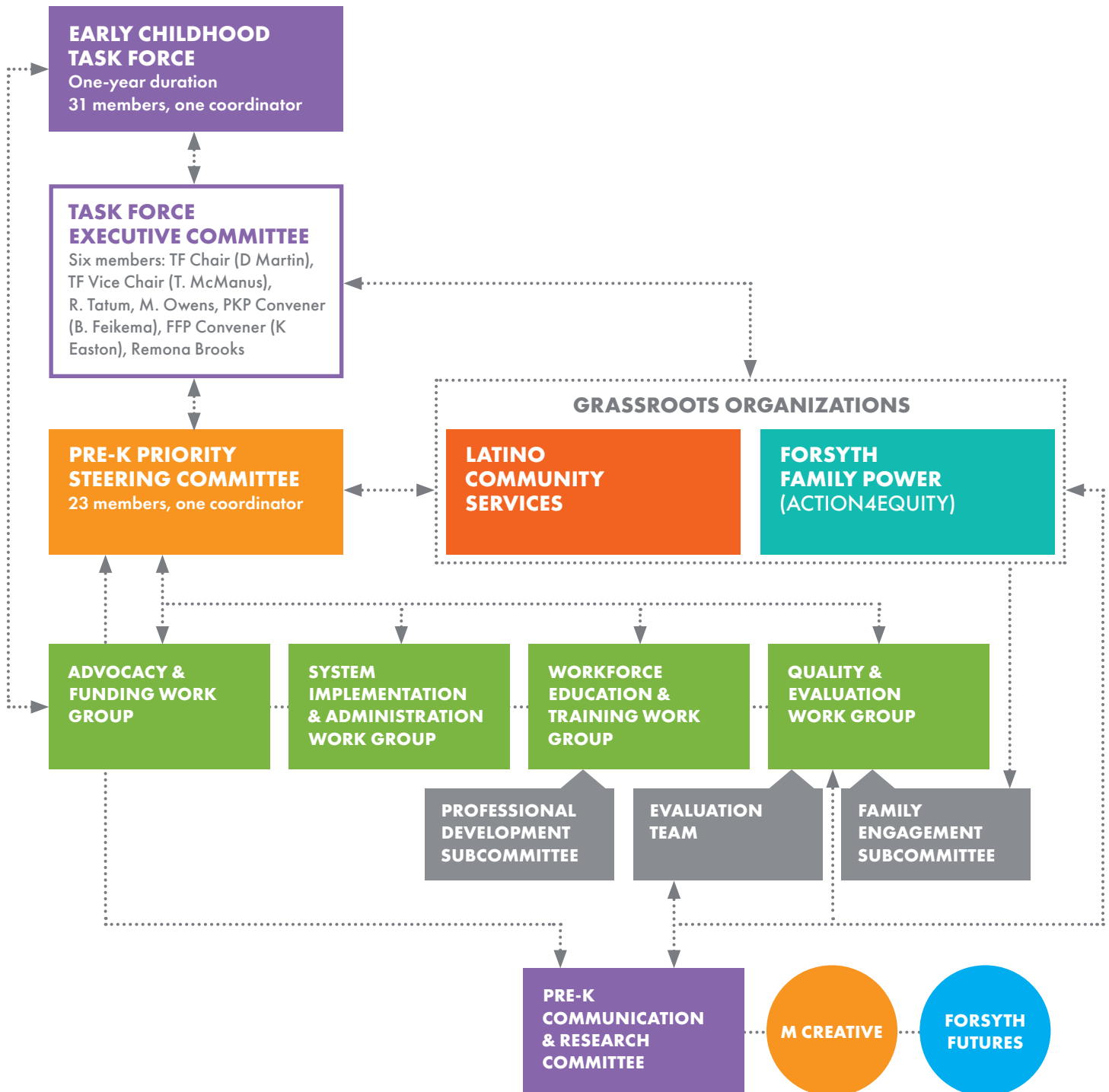
Connect and network with local and state-level organizations to follow and respond to the latest news and policy developments related to early childhood education and child care. Partner, support, and (in some cases) lead advocacy efforts in concert with local and state groups to secure increased NC Pre-K funding and equitable market rates for child care subsidy reimbursements.



Appendix E

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

TASK FORCE COMMUNICATION DIAGRAM



Appendix F

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE OVERVIEW (2021-2022)

PURPOSE

Reading proficiency is a key to success in school and life. For many years, a substantial number of children in Forsyth County have entered school lacking pre-requisite skills that support reading attainment, and as a result, are challenged to achieve reading proficiency by third grade, which is a strong indicator of future success.

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Task Force will **create a plan** for the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated Pre-K system in Forsyth County that will provide all families in Forsyth County with the opportunity to enroll their children in a high-quality Pre-K program.

An ECE Task Force Report has been published, describing the planning process and recording the recommendations adopted by the Task Force. The report also summarizes the ARPA application, which demonstrated the ability of partner agencies to collectively develop a model version of a high-quality Pre-K system, that will provide a foundation for future expansion.

While the ECE Task Force is a planning and recommendatory body, it is anticipated that its members will utilize their relevant expertise and/or influence to **assist in bringing about the implementation of the plan.**

We appreciate the members of the Task Force for their support of this work and participating in the process of drafting and vetting the recommendations. Their insights and input at the April meeting were especially helpful in determining how these recommendations would be considered in the near and longer-term phases.

ACTIONS & GOALS

1. Establish an implementation timeline for expanding opportunities for families in Forsyth County to enroll their children in a high-quality Pre-K program.

In the short term, the ARPA grant will allow a first phase of implementation to include a model 30-classroom cohort. That two-year time period will allow the Pre-K Priority insight and the ability to continue working on aspects of the longer term implementation. That work will also include enacting the recommendations adopted by the Task Force.

2. Establish priorities for the order in which families will be served at each stage in an incremental expansion of Pre-K programs.

While this was not specifically achieved during the period the Task Force convened, it will be further considered in the selection process that will occur for 30 classroom cohort. That process will then allow the Pre-K Priority Steering Committee to further determine the most equitable method to use for incremental expansion.

3. Create a streamlined system that pays special attention to equity.

A streamlined system is yet to be realized, but the two-year ARPA-funded model will allow many lessons to be learned and used in creating a more streamlined system of high-quality classrooms. The inclusion of the Equity Manager in the ARPA proposal will be key to this process.

4. Maintain a mixed system of high-quality Pre-K providers that honors parent choice and the diverse cultures and priorities of families.

The goal of a mixed system of providers gives families choice in selecting the type of setting that is best for their child. The 30-classroom cohort will comprise a mix of providers that includes the private/independent child care sector, community-based centers, Head Start, and the WS/FCS.

Appendix F (cont.)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASK FORCE OVERVIEW (2021-2022)

ACTIONS & GOALS (cont.)

5. Ensure that evidence-based practices and standards associated with high-quality Pre-K programs are included in the Forsyth County system.

The Quality & Evaluation Work Group met monthly this past year to research and analyze high-quality standards and best practices, locally and nationally. Their work to assess our current Pre-K landscape through a detailed, gap analysis exercise allowed for informed recommendations to support high-quality standards moving forward. These standards are adhered to in the ARPA proposal.

6. Develop a plan for obtaining funding from public and private sources at the federal, state, and local level sufficient to support an expanded, high-quality Pre-K system.

The timing of the County ARPA funding application has been advantageous in that it provides a jump-start opportunity to fund a two-year model with local funding that may be continued by the County after 2024. This is predicated on the two-year model being well run and showing positive outcomes.

Importantly, there is still much advocacy work to do locally and at the state level to gain the support and additional funding to further expand equitable high-quality Pre-K.

7. Identify effective and efficient methods for managing, administering, and evaluating the Pre-K system.

The ARPA Application Team Meetings and process of preparing the grant for submission required consideration of various administration models, addressing fundamental challenges of working collaboratively, and ultimately, consensus on the best method to manage and administer the initial phase. As for the evaluation, a subcommittee of the Quality & Evaluation work group provided a draft framework that will help guide the selection of a contracted evaluator for the ARPA project.

8. Establish means and methods that provide for the recruitment, retention, and development of a well-trained and adequately compensated Pre-K workforce.

The Workforce Development & Education Work Group met monthly over the last year and achieved a number of their goals related to recruitment. The Work Group addressed: professional development; coaching; and tuition support.

The Quality & Evaluation Work Group also made recommendations in these areas:

- 1) provide equitable compensation to all Pre-K teachers (that have comparable education and experience) regardless of their place of employment;
- 2) provide retention bonuses to individuals;
- 3) create a system for tuition support for those continuing to earn further credentials in an institute of higher learning. (The Q&E Work Group established teacher licensure and credentialing requirements.)

These recommendations are included in the ARPA application and will be applied to those teachers within the 30-classroom cohort. The tuition support will be applied more broadly to anyone that meets the criteria.

9. Integrate stakeholder feedback to ensure that community, family, teacher, and provider voices and wisdom are incorporated in the plan to expand Pre-K opportunities.

The grassroots groups of Action4Equity and Latino Community Services have been working alongside the Pre-K Priority to incorporate the voices of families and parents that are in the Pre-K space. They have offered workshops to inform and prepare families for advocacy, thereby empowering family members to actively engage in various levels of their child's education process.

Their work will continue to inform the policies and methods that are incorporated into the 30-classroom model and what is learned over the next two years to prepare for expansion.

Providers and teacher representatives have contributed their input in the Pre-K Priority Work Groups and on the ARPA Application Team. A concerted effort to have those voices more fully incorporated into the work will be prioritized in the next steps.

10. Assess the impact of Pre-K expansion on the overall (birth to age 5) system of early childhood education/development resources in Forsyth County.

This was unable to be realized within the scope and time frame of the Task Force's work. However, this important aspect has been and will continue to be an important factor in all expansion decisions.

11. Make recommendations to elected officials, Pre-K providers, and civic institutional leaders regarding policies that affect the quality, funding, implementation, management/administration, and evaluation of an expanded Pre-K system in Forsyth County.

The County ARPA application and the involvement of institutional leaders on the Task Force — particularly the leadership provided by Commissioner Martin, the Task Force Chair — have provided the momentum to encourage additional civic leaders to become active supporters of early childhood education in Forsyth County. The recommendations contributed and adopted by the Task Force over the past year will enable Forsyth County to move to the next level in the development of a high-quality Pre-K system.

12. Create dialogue within the existing structure of businesses and learning institutions to formally support a structure to grow a comprehensive early childhood education system.

This year the Workforce Education & Training Work Group propelled the collaborative work and creation of an Early Educator Credentialing crosswalk document between the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Career & Technical Training Department, Forsyth Technical Community College and Winston-Salem State University. These institutions continue to work together on opportunities to recruit and maintain students in the early education pipeline.

The support of Forsyth County businesses is yet to be fully realized. The establishment of a fund to provide tuition support for teachers seeking to improve their professional credentials has been discussed with and encouraged by business leaders on the Task Force. A focused campaign to secure the support of the business community is needed and will be developed as part of the Pre-K Priority's continuing work.

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THE PRE·K PRIORITY

We commit to working to develop affordable, high-quality Pre-K experiences that are inclusive, joyful, create a love of learning, and build positive identity.

We commit to eliminating disparities and achieving equity by providing all children with the resources they need to be ready to succeed in school.

We commit to supporting programs that are culturally responsive and celebrate home languages, cultures, and traditions.

We commit to ensuring access to high-quality programs that are in accord with the values and needs of each family.

We commit to incorporating the knowledge and lived experience of parents as experts on their children and communities into Pre-K programs, processes, and systems.

We commit to going beyond what's been done in the past by adopting new, creative, and effective ideas to enable us to achieve our vision of a community in which all children are able to succeed in school and in life.



THE PRE-K PRIORITY is a collaboration of community organizations committed to early childhood education and supported by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust.

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