



Questions & Answers

Do all children need preschool?

All children should have access to high-quality preschool programs that place them in the best position possible for future success. Studies show that children from all income and racial groups benefit from high-quality preschool. The benefits of preschool are particularly powerful among children from low-income families who, too often start kindergarten behind their peers in pre-reading and language skills.

What's the evidence that preschool makes a difference?

There is strong research demonstrating the impact of high-quality preschool programs on child outcomes – both short- and long-term. Multiple studies have shown that children who attend high-quality preschool programs score higher on mathematics and reading assessments in the elementary grades; gain critical non-cognitive, or “soft skills,” needed for success in school; are less likely to need special education services; are less likely to be retained in grade; and are more likely to graduate from high school than children who do not attend such programs.

How does voluntary, universal pre-k positively impact the economy in the long term?

When children start school ready to succeed, they are more likely to graduate high school. Workers in Mecklenburg County with a high school diploma earn over \$7,051 more annually than those who have not completed high school. Adding a four-year college degree translates to an additional \$25,172 annual increase in earnings. As business leaders look for a skilled workforce, they know school readiness matters. To business leaders, it's about economic productivity and community economic vitality. That's why the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council (CELC), a group of two dozen leading Charlotte CEOs, recommends implementing voluntary, universal pre-k.

How will it be implemented?

The 5-point plan recommended by the Mecklenburg County Early Education Committee includes a 6-year phase-in for voluntary, universal public pre-k.

How will a high-quality early childhood workforce be defined and what steps are required to attract and retain the workforce needed to meet children's diverse needs?

Any new pre-k class would be required to have high qualifications for pre-k teachers and staff, community-based centers will have to work to ensure that they have a qualified early childhood workforce, and funding allocations would include funds to ensure comparable pay for teachers to the public school system. High-quality pre-school programs must include, at a minimum, the same qualifications as the statewide NC Pre-K program – teachers with a bachelor's degree in early childhood development or related field and a B-K teacher license (or be in the process of obtaining a B-K license) plus professional development for all teachers and staff.

Are you talking about a massive expansion of County government?

No. We spent a lot of time over the past year getting to really understand the foundational programs in place. What we are talking about is building on what we have in place – expanding on it. Not expanding government. The pre-k component is not a new program. Our goal is that if you look at Bright Beginnings, the current NC Pre-K classrooms, and the expansion pre-k classrooms, there would not be a difference. The pre-k expansion classrooms would be located in child care centers. This is a community-based initiative, not a big government initiative.

So, would the County be in the construction business? Will construction be needed for all these pre-k classrooms/buildings?

No. Child care center enrollment is below licensed capacity. Focus groups indicate centers have or can create physical capacity. We are not talking about construction. We want to work with community child care center providers to offer additional pre-k classrooms.

Is funding for Early Childhood Education which includes expansion of pre-k included in the County's FY2019 Recommended Budget?

Yes. To continue the County's commitment to early childhood education, the Recommended Budget includes \$9 million to add 33 pre-k classrooms, which will serve 600 children, and \$700,000 for additional child care subsidy funding specifically for those enrolled in Mecklenburg County workforce development programs. The Recommended Budget also includes \$300,000 for Renaissance West, which will provide scholarships for up to 21 children at the Howard Levine Child Development Center and life navigators to support 42 parents in their paths to employment.

Will the County's tax rate change?

Yes. The County's current tax rate of 81.57 cents per \$100 of assessed value has remained constant for five years. However, to make these bold investments in early childhood education, a small tax increase is required. The Recommended Budget includes a tax increase of .75 cents, which will bring the County tax rate to 82.32 cents per \$100 of assessed value. On a single-family home valued at \$250,000, this increase amounts to \$18.75 per year, or about \$1.56 per month.

What happens next?

The Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners will hold a public hearing to receive citizen input on the County Manager's FY2019 Recommended Budget on Monday, June 4 at 6 p.m. in the Meeting Chamber of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. [Residents can register to speak here.](#) Following the public hearing, the Board will hold a Straw Vote session on June 12-13 in Room 267 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. The Straw Vote meetings will begin at 9 a.m.



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