

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

JOSH STEIN
GOVERNOR

DEV DUTTA SANGVAI
SECRETARY

August 19, 2025

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

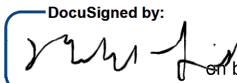
Mr. Brian Matteson, Director
Fiscal Research Division
Suite 619, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

Dear Director Matteson:

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) and NC General Statute 143B-168.10A require the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), to submit an annual report on the NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) program to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. Pursuant to the provisions of law, the Department is pleased to submit the attached report.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Karen Wade, Director of Policy, at Karen.Wade@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

on behalf of Devdutta Sangvai
3C33184820C14A9...
Devdutta Sangvai
Secretary



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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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The Honorable Donna White, Chair
House Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 307B, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Timothy Reeder, Chair
House Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 416B, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

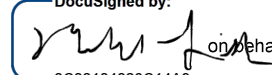
The Honorable Larry Potts, Chair
House Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 307B1, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

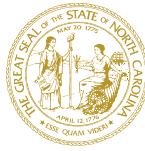
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The Honorable Jim Burgin, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 620, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Amy Galey, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 311, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

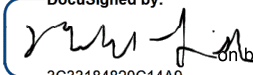
The Honorable Benton Sawrey, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 521, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

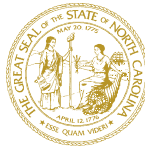
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The Honorable Carla Cunningham, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 402, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

The Honorable Donny Lambeth, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
Health and Human Services
North Carolina General Assembly
Room 303, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

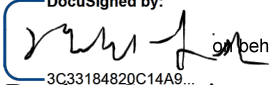
The Honorable Larry Potts, Chair
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on
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North Carolina General Assembly
Room 307B1, Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

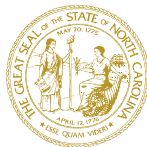
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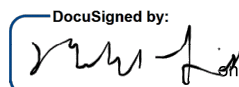
Ms. Kristin Walker
State Budget Director
Room 5200, Administration Building
Raleigh, NC 27603

Dear Director Walker:

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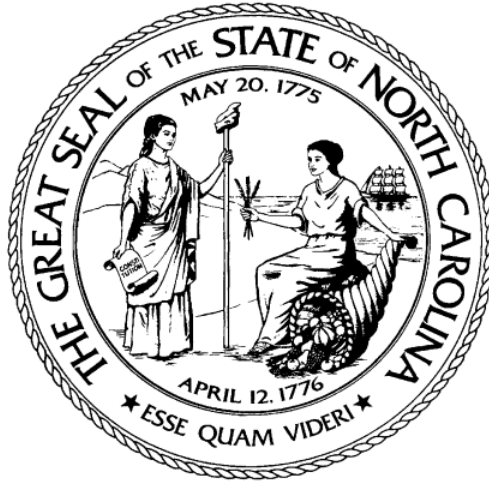
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Devdutta Sangvai
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**Annual NC Pre-K Report
State Fiscal Year 2023-2024**

**Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f)
NC General Statute 143B-168.10A**



Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations

**Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health
and Human Services**

House Appropriations on Health and Human Services

Senate Appropriations on Health and Human Services

Office of State Budget and Management

Fiscal Research Division

**By
North Carolina Department of Health and
Human Services**

August 19, 2025

Reporting Requirements

Session Law 2023-134, Section 9D.1.(f) requires the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to submit an annual report no later than March 15 of each year to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Fiscal Research Division. The report shall include the following:

- (1) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program by county.
- (2) The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program who have never been served in other early education programs such as childcare, public or private preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, or early intervention programs.
- (3) The expected NC Pre-K expenditures for the programs and the source of the local contributions.
- (4) The results of an annual evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program.

The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program by county:

In SFY 2023-2024, there were a total of 30,086 children participating in NC Pre-K services. The chart below lists the distribution by county.

County	# Total Children	Percent
Alamance	505	1.68
Alexander	70	0.23
Alleghany	67	0.22
Anson	138	0.46
Ashe	102	0.34
Avery	58	0.19
Beaufort	136	0.45
Bertie	86	0.29
Bladen	177	0.59
Brunswick	281	0.93
Buncombe	459	1.53
Burke	406	1.35
Cabarrus	378	1.26
Caldwell	316	1.05
Camden	50	0.17
Carteret	219	0.73
Caswell	69	0.23
Catawba	429	1.43
Chatham	245	0.81
Cherokee	80	0.27
Chowan	96	0.32
Clay	55	0.18
Cleveland	523	1.74

County	# Total Children	Percent
Columbus	305	1.01
Craven	287	0.95
Cumberland	1,525	5.07
Currituck	48	0.16
Dare	141	0.47
Davidson	328	1.09
Davie	187	0.62
Duplin	349	1.16
Durham	636	2.11
Edgecombe	253	0.84
Forsyth	804	2.67
Franklin	177	0.59
Gaston	808	2.69
Gates	41	0.14
Graham	41	0.14
Granville	151	0.50
Greene	109	0.36
Guilford	2,378	7.90
Halifax	224	0.74
Harnett	398	1.32
Haywood	130	0.43
Henderson	181	0.60
Hertford	118	0.39
Hoke	316	1.05
Hyde	17	0.06
Iredell	367	1.22
Jackson	91	0.30
Johnston	379	1.26
Jones	54	0.18
Lee	328	1.09
Lenoir	161	0.54
Lincoln	293	0.97
Macon	122	0.41
Madison	20	0.07
Martin	95	0.32
McDowell	242	0.80
Mecklenburg	1,651	5.49
Mitchell	23	0.08
Montgomery	205	0.68
Moore	54	0.18
Nash	355	1.18
New Hanover	686	2.28

County	# Total Children	Percent
Northampton	88	0.29
Onslow	729	2.42
Orange	255	0.85
Pamlico	51	0.17
Pasquotank	171	0.57
Pender	323	1.07
Perquimans	37	0.12
Person	139	0.46
Pitt	605	2.01
Polk	99	0.33
Randolph	415	1.38
Richmond	227	0.75
Robeson	646	2.15
Rockingham	262	0.87
Rowan	332	1.10
Rutherford	293	0.97
Sampson	362	1.20
Scotland	305	1.01
Stanly	269	0.89
Stokes	146	0.49
Surry	283	0.94
Swain	119	0.40
Transylvania	74	0.25
Tyrrell	17	0.06
Union	319	1.06
Vance	249	0.83
Wake	1,609	5.35
Warren	72	0.24
Washington	69	0.23
Watauga	102	0.34
Wayne	636	2.11
Wilkes	392	1.30
Wilson	170	0.57
Yadkin	154	0.51
Yancey	44	0.15
Total	30,086	100

The number of children participating in the NC Pre-K Program who have never been served in other early education programs such as childcare, public or private preschool, Head Start, Early Head Start, or early intervention programs.

Of the 30,086 children participating in a NC Pre-K Program in SFY 2023-2024, 17,448 (58%) were never previously served in other early education programs.

The NC Pre-K expenditures for the programs and the source of local contribution:

The SFY 2023-2024 average funds allocated for NC Pre-K Districts by source are listed below. Dollar values for in-kind resources are not included.

	SFY 2023-2024
Total direct service funds allocated	\$1,906,805.53
Smart Start resources	\$103,166.12
Head Start resources	\$287,674.99
Title I resources	\$238,773.64
Preschool Disability resources	\$123,805.65
City count resources	\$57,015.75
Subsidy resources	\$20,737.13
CACFP resources	\$92,806.63
Private provider resources	\$45,961.18

The source of local contributions as certified and reported by NC Pre-K contractors from July 1, 2023 through November 30, 2023 (part year) are noted in the chart below. Certification of expenditures of other resources in each NC Pre-K Program through November 30 is an annual reporting requirement. Certified Other Resources are reported to DCDEE by local contractors each year and should represent up to five (5) months of actual expenditures. These expenditures listed by funding source represent the amount of cash – not in-kind contributions- that has been spent during this time period from other sources to support the NC Pre-K Program. NC Pre-K subcontractors serve children for ten months. If a similar amount of funds were expended for the remaining five months of services, a total of \$103 million of other resources may be expended.

<u>Certified Other Resources</u>	<u>Expenditures Reported through 11/30/23</u>
Head Start	\$ 14,724,795
Title I	\$ 10,864,316
Smart Start	\$ 5,503,501
Preschool Disabilities Program	\$ 7,137,878
Other	\$ 4,301,436
Local Appropriations	\$ 3,286,278
Child and Adult Care Food Program	\$ 2,837,622
Private Providers	\$2,187,002
Total (Five months)	\$ 51,047,000

The Results of the Annual Evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program¹

DCDEE contracts with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute to conduct an annual evaluation of the NC Pre-K Program. Program evaluation and trend analyses were completed using administrative and descriptive data from three main NC Pre-K databases with the following key findings:

- For SFY 2023-2024, the NC Pre-K Program served over 30,000 children in over 2,000 classrooms.
- Most NC Pre-K classrooms (54.2%) were located in public school settings, about one-third (32.7%) were located in private settings, and 13.1% were in Head Start.
- Average maximum class size was 17.8 and average number of NC Pre-K enrolled children per class was 12.9².
- Children attended NC Pre-K an average of 134.3 days, representing 79% of the average days of operation (170).
- Characteristics for children enrolled resembled historic characteristics of children enrolled in NC Pre-K programs; specifically:
 - About half were boys and half girls;
 - Nearly a quarter (23.8%) identified as Latinx ethnicity. Nearly one-half were White, over one-third (38.2%) Black or African American, about 7% were multiracial, and fewer than 5% of children were either Native American or Alaskan Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Note: children could identify as Latinx ethnicity in addition to race categories;
 - 79% of the children attending NC Pre-K had at least one parent in the workforce;
 - Children served by the NC Pre-K Program primarily came from low-income families, with 76% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch;
 - For other eligibility factors, 14% identified as having limited English proficiency, 19.1% with a developmental/educational need, and approximately 3-7% with either an identified disability or chronic health condition, and approximately 5% with a military parent; and
 - Over half (58%) of children participating in NC Pre-K had never previously been served in any preschool setting and an additional 12% were unserved at the time of enrollment but may have previously been served in a preschool or child care setting.
- For the NC star-rated licenses (the Quality Rating and Improvement System or QRIS in NC), approximately 80% of the sites had a five-star rating and 17% had a four-star rating.

¹ Leggett T, Ping Chen, and Zadrozny S. (2025). Findings from the North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten Program. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.

² Evaluation report for 2025 updated measure of average class size to average maximum class with average number of NC Pre-K enrolled children per class due to a class size variable no longer being available in the data system.

- About 95% of classrooms reported using Creative Curriculum and its companion assessment (Teaching Strategies Gold or the Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum). All classrooms reported using an approved developmental screening tool.
- Teacher educational attainment is high across settings (about 99% of lead teachers have a bachelor's degree or higher), and teacher qualifications (education and licensure/credentials) have increased over time.
- Results from trend analyses examined whether there have been any long-term changes in key program characteristics since the NC Pre-K Program (formerly called "More at Four") was expanded statewide (2003-2004) through the 2023-24 program year, indicating:
 - Little change over time in the distribution of NC Pre-K classrooms by setting types;
 - Fairly consistent patterns over time for children's prior placement;
 - One notable change in the program has been the increases in teacher qualifications (education and licensure/credentials) over time. There were significant changes over time for all aspects of teacher qualifications that were examined (it should be noted that teacher education has essentially reached the maximum level in the 2023-2024 cohort). There has been an increasing trend over time in the percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher. For lead teachers, there has been an increasing trend in the percentage of those with a B-K license and a decreasing trend in the percentage of those with no credential.