

MECK Pre-K Overview



Board Retreat FY2023

Mecklenburg County Public Pre-K

Mecklenburg County has three public Pre-K programs available for free to eligible families

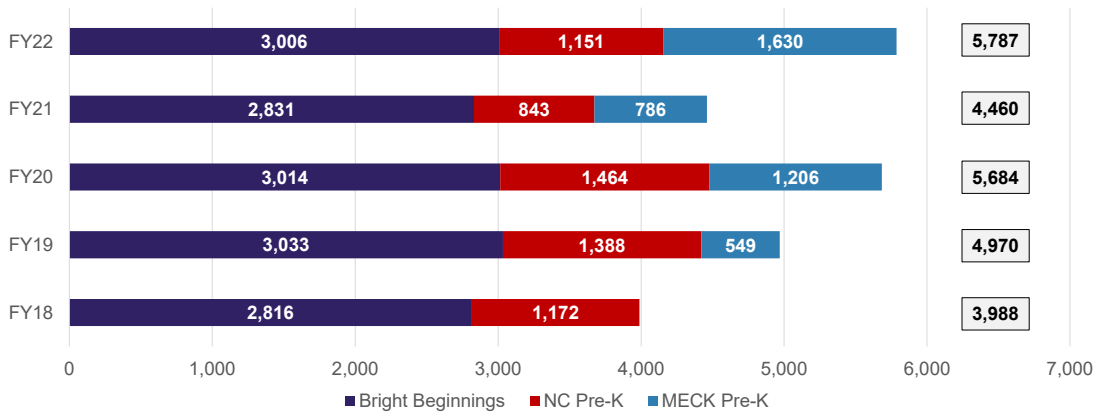
	MECK Pre-K	NC Pre-K	Bright Beginnings
Administrator	Smart Start	CMS	CMS
Age Requirement	Must be 4 years old on or before August 31 of the school year		
Residency Requirement	Must live in Mecklenburg County		
Additional Eligibility Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None – but families are prioritized based on need (household income and documented risk factors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income is at 75% of state median income or below OR Military family OR Documented risk factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmental need based on screening
Locations	Childcare centers	Childcare centers	CMS schools
Teacher Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Teacher: Bachelor's Degree and B-K Teaching License Assistant Teacher: Associates Degree in Early Childhood field 		
Teacher Employer	Childcare center	Childcare center	CMS
Total Budget	\$23.3M		\$43.6M
County Funding	\$23.3M		\$13M ¹

1) County funding is only for Bright Beginnings and includes 173 positions (teachers, student support, assistants, and other positions)

Mecklenburg County Public Pre-K Enrollment

Pre-K enrollment took a significant hit from COVID-19 during the FY21 school year but has rebounded above pre-pandemic levels

Public Pre-K Enrollment by Year¹

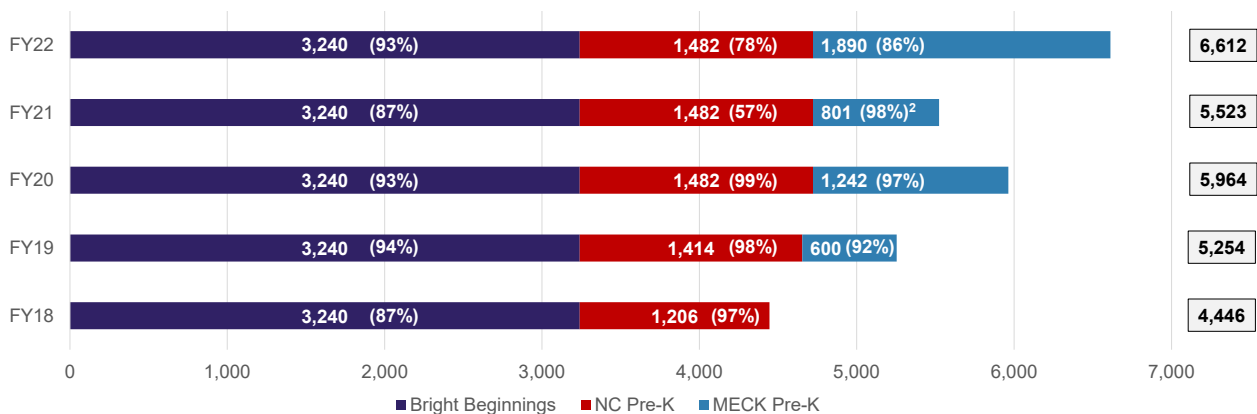


1) Data as of 1/12/2022

Mecklenburg County Public Pre-K Enrollment

Increases in available MECK Pre-K and NC Pre-K slots have greatly expanded access to Pre-K...but there are still open seats in all programs

Total Public Pre-K Seats by Year (% of Seats Filled)¹



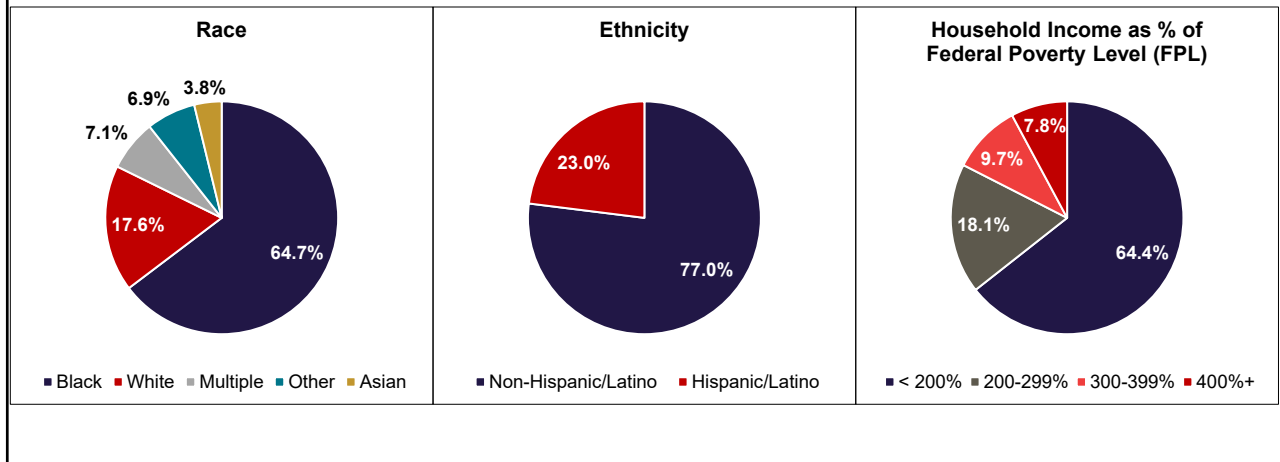
1) Data as of 1/12/2022

2) Classroom capacity was lowered to 50% due to COVID, capping available seats at 801

FY22 MECK Pre-K Demographics

Equity is a core tenet for MECK Pre-K – the program serves a diverse population and prioritizes placing children with the greatest need

Breakdown of Currently Enrolled MECK Pre-K Students



MECK Pre-K Successes and Challenges

Successes

- ❑ Continued to open on schedule and operate in-person in FY21 and FY22
- ❑ Applications and enrollment continue to increase YoY
- ❑ In FY21, over 80% of students hit Kindergarten Readiness benchmarks for the following domains: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive
- ❑ Built out robust coaching, instructional support, and full-service family support models
- ❑ Developmental screening for all children
- ❑ Launched online platform

Challenges

- ❑ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the childcare industry and exacerbated deep-rooted compensation issues for staffers
- ❑ The competitive labor market and realities of the childcare business model have led to a nationwide childcare staffing crisis
- ❑ Raising awareness around the importance of high-quality Pre-K and driving demand to fill all available public Pre-K seats

Opportunities

- ❑ Federal and State dollars available for the early childhood space (awaiting guidance and legislative discussions)
- ❑ Expanded child recruitment pathways (employers, MDs, County, churches, etc.)
- ❑ Enhanced collaboration with CMS and other partners on a community-wide Pre-K strategy
- ❑ Centralized recruitment and job matching for prospective teachers

Teacher compensation is equivalent across MECK Pre-K, NC Pre-K, and Bright Beginnings

FY23 MECK Pre-K Planning

The County began deviating from the initial MECK Pre-K implementation plan in FY21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic

		FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Planned	Classrooms	33	69	105	161	218	275
	FPL Cutoff	220%	300%	400%	None	None	None
	Capacity (Seats)	600	1,242	1,890	2,898	3,924	4,950

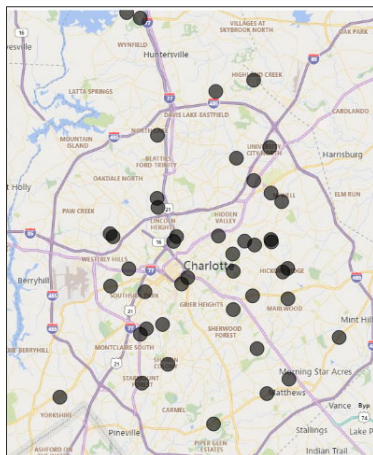
		FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
Actual / Proposed	Classrooms	33	69	89	105	105	--
	FPL Cutoff	220%	300%	None	None	None	--
	Capacity (Seats)	600	1,242	801 ¹	1,890	1,890	--

For FY23 we are proposing to maintain our current level of 105 classrooms to ensure, due to the early childhood workforce shortage, we can staff all classrooms with highly qualified teachers and focus on driving demand in high priority areas to fill all available seats

1) Classroom capacity was lowered to 50% due to COVID, capping available seats at 801

Community Pre-K Strategy

MECK Pre-K is working with CMS and community partners to better streamline site locations to expand access to families in high priority locations



- Assess data from MECK Pre-K, CMS, Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI), census bureau, etc. to better understand what supply and demand look like across Mecklenburg County
- Proactively reach out to childcare providers in high priority locations to possibly host classrooms
- Identify high priority locations:
 - Low-performing CMS schools
 - Areas with little to no public Pre-K available
 - Areas with a higher % of children living in lower income households
- Avoid dual program sites (MECK Pre-K & NC Pre-K in the same center)

Pre-K Workforce Pipeline

The County is helping the Foundation for the Carolinas oversee a workforce pipeline grant initiative to produce more qualified Pre-K teachers

CPCC

- ❑ Currently in Year 3 of the program
- ❑ The CPCC-STRIVE Early Childhood Education Initiative is aimed at helping individuals pursue an associate degree in Applied Science in Early Childhood Education
- ❑ Funding covers tuition and student support costs (e.g., transportation, childcare, materials, etc.)
- ❑ 111 scholars awarded
- ❑ 24 scholars completed degrees
- ❑ 7 degree completers transferred to 4-year institutions

UNCC

- ❑ Currently in Year 2 of the program
- ❑ The UNCC Early Childhood Education Grant Scholarship Initiative is aimed at preparing individuals to earn a B-K teaching license
- ❑ Funding covers tuition and student support costs (e.g., transportation, childcare, materials, etc.)
- ❑ 15 scholars awarded
- ❑ 2 scholars completed degrees
- ❑ Designed a flexible part-time program track to reach more prospective scholars

MECK Pre-K is also leading aggressive recruitment efforts statewide, and has partnered with the County's Unified Workforce Development team to help connect providers and job candidates

FY23 MECK Pre-K Vision

- ❑ Maintain the current number of classrooms (105) while:
 - Continuing to navigate the workforce challenges childcare centers are facing nationwide
 - Expanding teacher recruitment and retention efforts to ensure all MECK Pre-K classrooms are staffed with highly qualified teachers
- ❑ Fill all available seats and serve more children than ever before through:
 - Proactive on-the-ground recruitment and expanding recruitment efforts into untapped pathways and partnerships
 - Targeted classroom placement in high priority locations