

NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) Program Requirements

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Section 1: Introduction

The NC Pre-K Program is a program of the Division of Child Development and Early Education in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. The program requirements are built on the premise that to be successful academically in school, children need to be prepared in all five of the developmental domains outlined by the National Education Goals Panel. Each of these domains is critical to children's well-being and for their success in reading and math as they come to school. The five domains, as reflected in *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success* are:

- Approaches to learning
- Emotional and social development
- Health and physical development
- Language development and communication
- Cognitive development

The requirements are designed to ensure that a high-quality pre-kindergarten classroom experience is provided for eligible four-year-olds in each local NC Pre-K Program and that, to the extent possible, uniformity exists across the state.

All NC Pre-K programs must comply with these requirements. Requests for exceptions to the requirements as specified in this document must be made in writing by the NC Pre-K local contractor to the Division of Child Development and Early Education:

Division of Child Development and Early Education
NC Department of Health and Human Services
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2075
919-662-4499 – Phone / 1-800-859-0829

www.ncchildcare.net

These *NC Pre-K Program Requirements* and the *NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual* may be downloaded from the Division of Child Development and Early Education website: <http://www.ncchildcare.net>

Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee

The NC Pre-K Program is built upon a system of existing local school boards and districts, private child care providers, and other entities that demonstrate the ability to provide high quality pre-kindergarten services for eligible 4-year olds.

The NC Pre-K Program requires that every county (or region) that chooses to participate in the NC Pre-K program to establish and maintain a County/Region NC Pre-K Committee. The purpose of the committee is to:

1. Select a contractor agency;
2. Develop operational policies and procedures;
3. Ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for developing, approving, and implementing the local plan for delivering NC Pre-K services at the community level;
4. Ensure that services are built on the existing early childhood service delivery system, and that service providers in the community with the ability to provide NC Pre-K services have the opportunity to express interest and be considered;
5. Provide ongoing, collaborative advice about local policies and procedures in the implementation of NC Pre-K services; and
6. Provide oversight for the local program (both programmatic and fiscal).

B. Committee Structure and Meetings

Co-Chairs

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee must be co-chaired by the school superintendent (or designee) for the local education agency (LEA) and the board chair (or designee) for the local Smart Start Partnership. If a designee is assigned, it must be done in writing and the designee must have the same decision-making authority as the school superintendent or local partnership board chair. The contract administrator (person named in the NC Pre-K Plan) shall not serve as the chair of the NC Pre-K Committee.

If there is more than one LEA or local Smart Start partnership in a county or region, one superintendent and one local Smart Start board chair may be designated to serve as the co-chairs. All superintendents (or designees) and local Smart Start board chairs (or designees) in a county or region must be members of the committee.

Membership

The co-chairs are responsible for appointing the committee members and convening the committee according to these *NC Pre-K Program Requirements*. Appointments shall be made annually. The co-chairs should create an independent County/Region NC Pre-K Committee. However, they may designate another functioning early childhood committee or board in the county/region that has the appropriate membership to serve in this capacity. If an existing early childhood committee is designated to serve in this capacity, the existing early childhood committee must officially adjourn from its meeting and requirements, then

officially reconvene as the NC Pre-K Committee operating under NC Pre-K requirements, with the required co-chairs and membership to perform NC Pre-K functions.

Committee membership must be kept current in the online NC Pre-KPlan, and shall consist of the following:

In addition to the co-chairs, representatives to the local NC Pre-K Committee must include:

1. Licensed child care center (4- or 5-star license preferred) representative,
2. Head Start program representative,
3. Parent of preschool-age children (especially children who are at-risk) representative,
4. Child care resource and referral agency or another child-serving agency representative,
5. Department of Social Services or other child care subsidy funding agency representative, and
6. Public schools exceptional children's preschool program representative(s).

Committee Meetings

The Committee is a public body subject to the Open Meeting Law (G.S. Chapter 143, Article 33C) and Public Records Law (G.S. Chapter 132) and must operate in accordance with their obligations under those statutes.

http://ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByArticle/Chapter_143/Article_33C.html

http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/html/bychapter/chapter_132.html

The committee, under the direction of the co-chairs, should set a meeting schedule and establish protocol that allows the committee to fulfill its functions. The committee must maintain minutes of all meetings that document: 1) meeting attendees; 2) items discussed; and 3) actions taken or decisions made. In addition to regular meetings, the Committee must meet prior to May 31 to advise planning and document approval of the NC Pre-K plan for the following year.

C. Committee Authority

Actions Requiring Full Committee Approval

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and is authorized to do the following (items 1-13):

1. Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan. All committee members must read and agree to the Assurances and Requirements, and sign Section 1, which must be submitted, along with a copy of the minutes of the meeting, to the Division of Child Development and Early Education by May 31.
2. Select or change the contract administrative agency (the Contractor).

Minutes and signatures of all committee members must be submitted to the Division of Child Development and Early Education for items 1 and 2.

3. Approve distribution of funding.

4. Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (i.e., payment rates to providers and other related costs).
5. Approve provider transportation charges to/from the NC Pre-K program.
6. Approve costs that may be charged to cover the full/partial costs of meals when children do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch.
7. Approve the voluntary release of allocated slots back to the state office (DCDEE).
8. Approve adding new sites or non-voluntary termination of sites in the County/Region Plan.
9. Approve requests to increase or decrease the budget involving NC Pre-K funds.

Items 3 through 9 require committee approval but do not require the signature of all Committee members. The minutes of the Committee meetings shall be kept on file and shall indicate members present, decisions made, and results of votes.

Actions Not Requiring the Full Committee

In cases where decisions must be made before the Committee can be convened, the Contract Administrator and/or Committee co-chairs may do the following on behalf of the Committee:

10. Approve moving slots across sites.
11. Approve requests for slots.
12. Approve the voluntary termination of sites.
13. Approve increases or decreases in the budget involving other resources accessed (but not state NC Pre-K funds).

For **actions 11 & 12**, signatures of the Committee co-chairs are required. A report of all actions must be reported back to the Committee.

D. Additional Functions – Committee and Contractor

The Committee serves in an advisory role to the Contract Administrator in the development and implementation of local policies and procedures for implementing NC Pre-K, including the following:

1. Developing and implementing a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying, and placing four-year-old children who are at-risk;
2. Participating in collaborative efforts to offer professional development services to early childhood programs in the community;
3. Demonstrating and documenting how programs are accessing resources other than those provided by NC Pre-K;
4. Documenting agreements with other community agencies regarding the provision of services to young children with disabilities;
5. Developing and implementing a written transportation plan showing how the transportation needs of participating children will be met;
6. Developing and implementing a written transition plan showing how the needs of participating children will be met as they transition into pre-kindergarten and then into kindergarten;
7. Providing all families of participating children with information about access to health insurance (Health Check and NC Health Choice) and the importance of a medical home

- for their children;
8. Identifying and using community resources to develop a plan for obtaining child health assessments within the required timeframe;
 9. Developing a plan for consultation services from a qualified health consultant for all sites; and
 10. Documenting a process for ensuring that qualified eligible teachers and teacher assistants are compensated at the appropriate levels (See Section 6, Tables 3 and 4).

E. Reporting Program Progress

The Contractor must report to the County/Region NC Pre-K Committee throughout the year on implementation of the County/Region Plan including:

1. Program progress (recruiting, child identification and eligibility, enrollment, and attendance);
2. Site updates (slot allotment and use; star licensure progress);
3. Site staff education levels and progress (administrators, teachers, assistants);
4. Professional development activities;
5. Efforts to collaborate with other agencies;
6. Strengths and barriers to service delivery;
7. Efforts to implement plans related to transportation, transitions, helping families access health insurance and a medical home, helping ensure child health assessments, and consultation from a qualified health professional; and
8. Fiscal and budget reports, including funds received and funds paid to subcontractor(s).

Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child

A. NC Pre-K Child Enrollment Eligibility

Local Contractors are responsible for determining NC Pre-K Child Eligibility.

Children served in a NC Pre-K slot must meet age requirements, eligibility beyond age requirements, **and** service priority criteria as defined in this section.

Age Requirements

1. Children to be enrolled must be four years of age on or before **August 31st** of the program year.
2. Children age eligible for kindergarten cannot be served with NC Pre-K funds.

Eligibility Beyond Age Requirements

A child that meets the age requirements is eligible for NC Pre-K if the child meets one of the criteria below:

- Is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75% of the State Median Income level;
- Has an identified disability as indicated by the child having a current Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- Has Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as indicated by the family and/or child speaking limited or no English in the home;
- Has a developmental or educational need as indicated by the child's performance results on an approved developmental screening;
- Has a chronic health condition as indicated by a health care provider diagnosis;
- Has at least one parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, the North Carolina National Guard or other state military force, or a Reserve Unit of the armed forces, and who is ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months, or expected to be ordered within the next 18 months. A child whose parent or legal guardian has been seriously injured or killed while on active duty is also eligible.

Priority Requirements to Serve Children Who are "At-Risk"

The priority of NC Pre-K is to serve eligible children who are "at-risk". For the purposes of determining eligibility priority for the NC Pre-K program, a child is considered "at-risk" if the child meets one of the criteria below:

- Is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75% of the State Median Income level.
- Has an identified disability as indicated by the child having a current Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Has been determined "at-risk" by DCDEE based upon documentation that the child's eligibility criteria and other factors constitute a significant and substantial risk that the child would be unable to avail himself/herself of the opportunity to obtain a sound basic education.

Eligibility for Families at or below 75% of State Median Income (SMI)

Income eligibility for NC Pre-K is determined by family size and gross income. **Children in families with annual incomes at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI) level are considered at risk for NC Pre-K services and will receive priority as noted in Section 3.B (see Table 1).**

Table 1. 75 % STATE MEDIAN INCOME*	
Family Size	75 Percent State Median Income
1	\$26,507
2	\$34,663
3	\$42,819
4	\$50,975
5	\$59,130
6	\$67,286
7	\$68,816
8	\$70,345
9	\$71,874
10	\$73,403
11	\$74,933
12	\$76,462

*Based on August 1, 2011 North Carolina Subsidized Child Care Eligibility Limits

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Maintenance of Effort (TANF MOE)

When a child is determined eligible for services, a % of poverty category must be determined (see Table 2), entered on the **Eligibility/Enrollment Scorecard** sheet, and in NC Pre-K Kids. **This information will be used to determine TANF MOE.**

Table 2. INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVEL*						
<i>NC Pre-K 2011-2012</i>						
Family Size	130%	150%	185%	200%	250%	300%
1	\$14,157	\$16,335	\$20,147	\$21,780	\$27,225	\$32,670
2	\$19,123	\$22,065	\$27,214	\$29,420	\$36,775	\$44,130
3	\$24,089	\$27,795	\$34,281	\$37,060	\$46,325	\$55,590
4	\$29,055	\$33,525	\$41,348	\$44,700	\$55,875	\$67,050
5	\$34,021	\$39,255	\$48,415	\$52,340	\$65,425	\$78,510
6	\$38,987	\$44,985	\$55,482	\$59,980	\$74,975	\$89,970
7	\$43,953	\$50,715	\$62,549	\$67,620	\$84,525	\$101,430
8	\$48,919	\$56,445	\$69,616	\$75,260	\$94,075	\$112,890
9	\$53,885	\$62,175	\$76,683	\$82,900	\$103,625	\$124,350
10	\$58,851	\$67,905	\$83,750	\$90,540	\$113,175	\$135,810
11	\$63,817	\$73,635	\$90,817	\$98,180	\$122,725	\$147,270
12	\$68,783	\$79,365	\$97,884	\$105,820	\$132,275	\$158,730

*Based on 2011 Federal Poverty Levels Revised July 26, 2011

B. Service Priority Status

After a pool of eligible children is determined, service priority status should be used to prioritize those children for NC Pre-K services.

Priority 1. Children Who Are "At-Risk"

First priority for service must be given to children who are "at-risk". A child is considered to be "at-risk" if the child meets one of the criteria below:

1. Is from a family whose gross income is at or below 75% of the State Median Income level.
2. Has an identified disability as indicated by the child having a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
3. Has been determined "at-risk" by DCDEE based upon documentation that the child's eligibility criteria and other factors constitute a significant and substantial risk that the child would be unable to avail himself/herself of the opportunity to obtain a sound basic education.

Priority 2. Other Eligible Children

Once children who are at-risk have been served, service may be provided to other eligible children who meet one of the criteria below:

1. Has Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as indicated by the family and/or child speaking limited or no English in the home.
2. Has a developmental or educational need as indicated by the child's performance results on an approved developmental screening.
3. Has a chronic health condition as indicated by a health care provider diagnosis.
4. Has at least one parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, the North Carolina National Guard or other state military force, or a Reserve Unit of the armed forces, and who is ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months, or expected to be ordered within the next 18 months. A child whose parent or legal guardian has been seriously injured or killed while on active duty is also eligible.

Exception for maintaining slots for 3-year old children

NC Pre-K slots designated to a site within a county/region can be used to serve 3-year-old children when they become age eligible. However, no slot may be held for a 3-year old child if a 4-year old child who is "at-risk" is available and waiting to be served.

C. NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Form

NC Pre-K Program Eligibility Form
(REVISED: Effective August 1, 2011)

Date Completed: _____
 Child's Name: _____ Birth Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Determining Eligibility Factors

- 1) Will the child be four years of age on or before **August 31st** of the program year?
 ___ No (Child not eligible; discontinue scorecard.)
 ___ Yes (Move to question 2.)
- 2) What is the annual family gross income? _____ What is the family size? _____

Is the parent(s) – check all that apply: (These are not eligibility requirements but this information will help DCDEE leverage federal funding)

- Employed**
- Seeking employment**
- In post-secondary education**
- In high school or in a GED program**
- In job training**

- 3) Does the family's countable income fall at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI)?
 ___ No (Go to question 4.)
 ___ Yes (Child is at-risk and receives priority status; complete table B.)
- 4) Does the child have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
 ___ No (Complete table A and B and move to question 5.)
 ___ Yes (Child is at-risk and receives priority status; complete table B.)

TABLE A		
Check one box for each:	Yes	No
Child of eligible military family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Limited English Proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chronic Health Condition(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developmental/Educational Need	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TABLE B (TANF/MOE only)	Check one
130% of poverty and below	
131 - 185% of poverty	
186 - 200% of poverty	
201 - 250% of poverty	
251 - 300% of poverty	
Above 300% of poverty	

- 5) Is there one or more yes boxes checked in Table A?
 ___ No (Child is not eligible for NC Pre-K)
 ___ Yes (Child is eligible to be served after all children who are "at-risk" have been placed.)

D. Definitions and Recommended Documentation for Verification

During the application process, at a minimum, the items and documentation identified in the chart below must be collected for each child and family. This information will serve two purposes: (1) to determine NC Pre-K eligibility and (2) for the state to determine TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and Matching contributions.

Element	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement substantiated by parent, guardian or caregiver signature is required for income, military status, family size, kinship.
Child's Name	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement.
Birth Date	Child's birth certificate, or medical records, or recorded in Family Bible
Child's SS #	Verification of child's social security number, if applicable
County	County of child's residence as documented on child's application.
Military Status	Parent, guardian or caregiver statement (signature required).
Kinship (signature required)	<p>Kinship is established when the child in care lives with an adult blood relative or with a non-relative who has legal custody or guardianship. If child is living with non-relatives or other adults that have legal custody or guardianship, guardian must present a <u>legal document</u> verifying they have <u>legal custody</u> or <u>guardianship</u>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A parent - This includes a natural mother or father, a legal mother or father, or adoptive parent(s) after issuance of the final order of adoption. 2. An alleged mother or father or other alleged maternal or paternal relative. 3. A blood or half-blood relative or adoptive relative limited to: brother, sister, grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent, uncle or aunt, great-uncle or aunt, great-great-uncle or aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin. 4. A step relative limited to: stepparent, stepbrother, and stepsister. 5. Spouses of anyone in the above groups, even after the marriage has been terminated by death or divorce. 6. Other adults who have legal custody or guardianship of a child. Foster parents do not have legal custody or guardianship; custody remains with the Department of Social Services.
Family Size (signature required) (Number in Family: parents, stepparents, all siblings)	<p>Include the following individuals living in the child's home:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NC Pre-K child plus all minor brothers and sisters, half brothers, half sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters. 2. Parents and stepparents of these children. 3. Incarcerated or institutionalized individuals are <u>not</u> included. 4. If a child is living with a relative like a grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc., or an individual who has <u>legal custody</u> or <u>legal guardianship</u>, then the family size consists of the NC Pre-K child, plus all minor brothers and sisters, half brothers, half sisters, stepbrothers and stepsisters living in the same household. The adults are <u>not</u> included, nor are the children of these adults counted.
Family Income (To convert weekly income to annual, multiply weekly by 4.3 to obtain monthly, then by 12 for annual.)	<p>Count parent or stepparent's regular gross income (signature required).</p> <p>Regular gross income may include income earned through sales commissions averaged over several months, regular employment through a temporary employment agency, child support, alimony payments, and workman's compensation.</p> <p>Excluded from regular gross income are parent, stepparent and child Supplemental Security Income, adoptive assistance, foster care payments, and irregular income (e.g., over-time, temporary unemployment pay, Work First, Food Stamps, student loans).</p> <p>If legal guardian, legal custodian, or other caregiver, only count the child's income, including Social Security Income and Child Support Payments. Do not count Supplemental Security Income. Count income from any <u>minor</u> siblings living in the home.</p>

E. Parent Co-payments

No parent co-payment shall be imposed for parents of children who are “at-risk” enrolled in the NC Pre-K program.

No parent co-payment shall be imposed for children who have at least one parent or legal guardian as an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, the North Carolina National Guard or other state military force, or a Reserve Unit of the armed forces, and who is ordered to active duty by the proper authority within the last 18 months, or expected to be ordered within the next 18 months. No parent co-payment shall be imposed for children whose parent or legal guardian has been seriously injured or killed while on active duty.

A parent co-payment may be assessed for other children eligible for NC Pre-K who are not “at risk.” However, a Contract Administrator may waive assessing a fee if the collection of a fee has the effect of diminishing the access of children who are “at-risk” to the NC Pre-K program.

F. Children with Unique Needs

When a teacher, parent, or other involved person has significant developmental, sensory, or behavioral concerns about a NC Pre-K child, he/she shall notify the local school system for assistance. The following steps shall be followed:

1. If, as a result of information gathered through the screening process, or from experience working with a particular NC Pre-K child, a NC Pre-K program has significant concerns about that child and the program’s ability to address his/her needs, the program shall notify the local school system’s Preschool Exceptional Children Program for assistance.
2. The NC Pre-K administrator, teacher, and parent, in consultation with the school system’s Preschool Exceptional Children Program and other available resources, shall work together to develop a coordinated plan to support the NC Pre-K child’s placement in the NC Pre-K program. Every effort shall be made to maintain the child’s enrollment and participation.
3. If efforts to access the consultation needed to develop a coordinated plan of support prove unsuccessful, the NC Pre-K program shall contact the Division of Child Development and Early Education for assistance.
4. The Division of Child Development and Early Education must be notified if the NC Pre-K child’s continued enrollment and participation becomes impossible due to chronic disruptions or concerns for the safety of that child or others, and it becomes necessary to find another placement for that child.

Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site

A. Facility Requirements

Pursuant to 2011 legislation, public school classrooms will have a one-year transition period to become licensed through DCDEE and may continue to operate NC Pre-K classrooms for the 2011-2012 school year. The Department shall create a transition plan to assist public schools in obtaining licensure through DCDEE. If meeting licensure standards for a public school constitutes a significant barrier to access to NC Pre-K for at-risk students, the public school may request a waiver of the licensure requirement from DCDEE.

Head Start programs operated by nonprofit organizations and all private nonprofit and for profit centers must meet North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education regulatory standards and maintain a 4 or 5 star license. Any Head Start program or private child care program that was granted approval to operate at a 3 star license because of certain conditions, must attain a 4 or 5 star license by July 2012.

B. Official NC Pre-K Day and Year

NC Pre-K sites must provide a Pre-K program for a regular school day (6.5 - 10 hours per day) for 180 instructional days per school calendar year.

C. Program Attendance Policy

Child attendance must be taken daily and submitted monthly for reimbursement. *(See the NC Pre-K Program Fiscal and Contract Manual, for requirements on the payment process.)*

When a child enrolled in the NC Pre-K program has been absent for three consecutive days, the site-level administrator should contact the family and determine the child's participation status. Any changes must be reported to the local contractor.

D. Nutrition

Sites must provide breakfast and/or snacks and lunch meeting USDA requirements during the regular school day. The partial/full cost of meals may be charged when families do not qualify for free/reduced price meals.

When children bring their own food for meals and snacks to the center, if the food does not meet the specified nutritional requirements, the center must provide additional food necessary to meet those requirements.

E. Transportation

When all other options have been exhausted, families with children participating in NC Pre-K may be charged a nominal amount for transportation to/from the NC Pre-K site. However, children who are at-risk should not be denied services based on the family's inability to pay.

F. Wrap-around Services

Families may also be charged for the cost of wraparound services provided before or after the regular school day, during holidays, or during summer months. NC Pre-K dollars may not be used for such costs.

G. Religious Activities

Activities, instruction, or communications which promote religious beliefs shall not be directed toward children participating in NC Pre-K during the NC Pre-K school day.

Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments

A health assessment is required to be on file at the NC Pre-K site within 30 days after a child enters the NC Pre-K program and must have been conducted within 12 months of program entry. The health provider is responsible for making appropriate referrals as indicated by the health assessment. The health assessment must include:

1. Physical examination
2. Updated immunizations
3. Vision screening
4. Hearing screening
5. Dental screening

All health assessments must be reviewed to ensure that all necessary referrals related to the results have been made.

B. Developmental Screening

All children enrolled in NC Pre-K must receive a developmental screening using an approved screening instrument, unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP). Children must be screened within 90 days after the first day of attendance in the program or within 6 months prior to the first day of attendance.

The NC Pre-K program requires that screening be used solely for the purpose of identifying children who should be referred for further evaluation and testing based on concerns in one or more developmental domains.

Children shall be screened using one of the approved screening instruments listed below:

1. Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3) or Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
2. Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)
3. Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, Third Edition (DIAL-3) or Fourth Edition (DIAL-4)
4. Brigance Early Childhood Screen II (3-5 Years), or Brigance Head Start Screen, or Brigance Preschool Screen – II, or Brigance K & 1 Screen – II

C. Early Learning Standards And Curricula

NC Pre-K programs must be knowledgeable about *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*, and use these early learning standards to guide their planning of developmentally

appropriate, high-quality prekindergarten experiences for children. *Foundations* is available at http://www.ncprek.nc.gov/Foundations/pdf/BW_condensed.pdf

In addition, each NC Pre-K classroom shall use an approved curriculum. The selected curriculum must be approved by the NC Child Care Commission. The Child Care Commission shall approve additional curricula during quarterly meetings following a pre-determined timeline. This shall be reflected in the NC Child Care Commission minutes.

The following list represents currently approved preschool curricula:

1. *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, 4th Edition or 5th Edition*, Teaching Strategies, Copyright 2002
2. *The Empowered Child™, Childtime, 2nd Edition*, Copyright 2007 (Approved for use in Childtime programs.)
3. *Explorations with Young Children: A Curriculum Guide from the Bank Street College of Education*, Gryphon House, Copyright 1992
4. *HighScope Preschool Curriculum*, HighScope Press, Copyright 2002
5. *Opening the World of Learning™ (OWL)*, Pearson Early Learning, Copyright 2005 (Approved with the stipulation that full-year programs have a plan to supplement or extend the curriculum since OWL is designed to cover a school year.)
6. *Passports: Experiences for Pre-K Success*, HighReach Learning, Copyright 2007 (Approved with the stipulation that programs purchase the *Compass* and at least one set of study/theme materials.)
7. *Tutor Time LifeSmart™*, Copyright 2005 (Approved for use in Tutor Time programs.)

D. Instructional Assessment

Classrooms are required to conduct ongoing assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as inform instruction. The following instruments meet this requirement.

1. HighScope Preschool Child Observation Record (COR) (second edition)
2. Work Sampling System (Meisels)
3. Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum, Ages 3-5 and Teaching Strategies GOLD;
4. Galileo On-line Assessment System
5. Learning Accomplishment Profile – Third Edition (LAP-3)
6. Learning Care System (for use with Tutor Time LifeSmart™ and The Empowered Child™ Childtime)

E. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size

The classroom will not exceed a maximum staff-to-child ratio of 1 to 9 with a maximum class size of 18 children, with one teacher and one assistant teacher per classroom. Classrooms that provide for inclusive settings for children with disabilities

may require an adult to child ratio smaller than 1 to 9. For LEA-administered public school exceptional children's preschool classrooms, ratios must be in compliance with the North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities, Section 1508-2, (Appendix B). <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/>

F. Rest Time

A rest/quiet period is required for each child every day, the length of which shall be determined according to the individual needs of each child.

During rest time, the staff/child ratio is considered in compliance if at least one staff is in the classroom with children while resting or is visually supervising all children. The second person needed to meet the 1 to 9 ratio must be on the premises, within calling distance of the classroom to remain in compliance.

G. Indoor and Outdoor Learning Environments

Classrooms shall provide high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environments that support the implementation of *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina's Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*, as well as the chosen curriculum. The outdoor classroom is considered an extension of the learning environment. Both indoor and outdoor environments shall address curricular objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, active learning experiences. Teachers shall arrange for children to be outdoors each and every day, for a minimum of one hour, weather permitting.

H. Family Engagement

NC Pre-K classrooms shall provide meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education.

NC Pre-Kindergarten programs shall develop a comprehensive plan for family engagement to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. The following are examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:

- (1) Home visits;
- (2) Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;
- (3) Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;
- (4) Parent education;
- (5) Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program; and
- (6) Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular service day.

A log of activities, opportunities, or communications made for family engagement must be on file at the NC Pre-K site.

Section 6: The NC Pre-K Staff

A. Administrator Licensure and Credentials

Public Schools

Principal licensure is required.

Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-Kindergarten Settings)

Directors/administrators of nonpublic schools must have, or be working toward a North Carolina Early Childhood Administrative Credential (NCECAC) Level III. For the director/administrator working toward the required NCECAC Level III, the following will apply:

1. Provisional approval will be given for four years from the time the site began participation with the NC Pre-K program for the director/administrator with NCECAC I or II to obtain the NCECAC Level III.
2. Progress toward NCECAC Level III will be considered a minimum of six documented semester hours per year. The local NC Pre-K contractor will maintain documentation of the progress toward the required standard.
3. Under certain conditions, administrators showing good faith effort toward meeting the credential requirement may be granted an extension to the four-year timeline. Local contractors must submit a request for an extension in writing to the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Administrators of NC Pre-K sites shall not serve as the NC Pre-K teacher or teacher assistant.

B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials

All teachers will hold, or be working toward a North Carolina (NC) Birth-through-Kindergarten (B-K) Standard Professional II or Preschool Add-on licensure. For teachers working toward the required education and license, the following requirements apply:

Public Schools

Teachers will hold a minimum of a BA/BS degree **and**:

1. NC Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License
or
2. A North Carolina K-6 license and a provisional Preschool Add-on license
or
3. Another North Carolina or other state's license and a NC Provisional B-K license.

Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-Kindergarten Settings)

Teachers will hold a minimum of a/an:

1. BA/BS degree in early childhood, child development, or a related field (human development and family studies, elementary education, or psychology), and be working toward a B-K License or eligible for a NC Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License.
- or**
2. A North Carolina K-6 license and provisional Preschool Add-on license
- or**
3. Another North Carolina or other state's license and a NC Provisional B-K license.

On a case by case basis during the 2011/2012 transition year, and in order to expand capacity, exceptions to the BA/BS requirement may be allowed for teachers that hold an AA degree in early childhood education or child development (or related field). These exception requests can be submitted to DCDEE for consideration if qualified teachers are not available.

All NC Pre-K teachers in nonpublic schools holding a minimum of a BA/BS degree must be enrolled with the Early Educator Support, Licensure & Professional Development Unit (formerly the Teacher Licensure Unit) of the DCDEE.

Time Limit for Classroom to Have B-K Licensed Teacher

1. Progress toward B-K or Pre-school Add-on licensure will be considered a minimum of six documented semester hours per year. The B-K license must be achieved within three years. The local NC Pre-K Contract Administrator will maintain documentation of the progress toward the required standard.
2. Pre-K teachers with an AAS degree shall complete a minimum of six documented semester hours per year towards a BA/BS degree and B-K Licensure, and shall achieve the BA/BS degree and B-K Licensure within four years. The administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division of the progress toward the required standard.

C. Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

All assistants will have a high school diploma or GED and will hold, or be working toward, a minimum of an Associate Degree in early childhood education or child development or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Teacher assistants working toward the Associate Degree or CDA shall make progress by completing a minimum of six documented semester hours per year. The administrator shall maintain documentation available for review by the Division of the progress toward the required standard.

Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-Kindergarten Settings)

1. Assistants will hold a high school diploma or GED equivalent and be working toward the ECE/CD associate degree or CDA (minimum).
2. Progress toward the ECE/CD associate degree or CDA will be considered a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

Exceptions for Public Schools

Teacher assistants employed by public schools are exempt from this requirement to hold an ECE/CD Associate Degree or CDA if they meet the employment requirements outlined by the federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation, and have one of the following:

- (1) Six documented semester hours of coursework in early childhood education, or
- (2) Two years of work experience in an early childhood setting.

Exceptions for Nonpublic Schools

Teacher assistants working in private settings with a BS/BA degree in early childhood, child development or a related field (human development and family studies, elementary education, or psychology) meet the education requirement.

D. Substitute Staff

When a member of the NC Pre-K teaching staff is unable to work, a substitute staff person must be provided to maintain the staff-to-child ratio (1:9 and 2:18), and to implement the program in accordance with NC Pre-K requirements. Substitute staff must be at least 18 years of age and meet the following minimum qualifications:

Teacher Substitutes for Short-term Vacancies

Requirements for short-term vacancies, when teachers are absent from the NC Pre-K classroom for 15 or fewer days, include the following:

1. **Nonpublic Schools (Private Child Care/Pre-Kindergarten Settings):** Substitutes in private settings must have at least a high school diploma or a GED, and some course work in early childhood education or child development, such as the North Carolina Early Childhood Credential.
2. **Public School Settings:** Substitutes must meet the requirements of the substitute policy consistent with the local education agency (LEA).

Teacher Substitutes for Long-term Vacancies

Requirements for long-term vacancies, when teachers are absent from the NC Pre-K classroom for 16 or more attendance days, include the following:

Regardless of the program setting, long-term substitutes must have at least an associate's degree in early childhood education/child development or 4-year degree in a related field (child development, early childhood education, elementary education, human development and family studies, or psychology).

Teacher Assistant Substitutes

Substitutes for teacher assistants must be at least 18 years of age and have a minimum of a high school diploma or a GED.

E. Instructional Staff Standards

Staff Time

Instructional staff shall work in direct contact with children in the NC Pre-K program for at least a 30-hour work week. In addition to these direct, day-to-day instructional experiences, instructional staff will require additional time for related instructional activities, including time for planning, scheduling and conducting home visits, meeting with children's families, and/or attending required professional development activities. These related activities shall take place outside of the 6 ½ - 10 hour day of direct teacher-child contact, and are not to exceed 40 hours per week.

Professional Development Requirements

Licensed Personnel: Licensed Principals, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in public schools will participate in professional development as consistent with the State Board of Education policy.

Administrators, Teachers, and Teacher Assistants in non-public school settings, working toward Pre-K qualifications will participate in a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

F. Compensation for Instructional Staff

Compensation includes all salary, wages, health and/or retirement benefits paid to eligible NC Pre-K teachers and teacher assistants working in public and nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs as defined in this Section.

Teacher Eligibility

1. Teachers who work in **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.

2. Teachers who work in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs and currently hold a NC Birth-Kindergarten (B-K), Preschool Add-On, Provisional B-K, Preschool Add-on, or Lateral Entry B-K license are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 3**.
3. Teachers with a BA/BS degree in child development, early childhood or a related field (human development and family studies, or psychology), and at least a 2.5 GPA will be granted an **Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License** and are also eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 3**.

Teacher Assistant Eligibility

1. Teacher assistants working in **public school** NC Pre-K programs will receive salaries based on the NC Public School Salary Schedule for Non-Certified Staff and receive health and retirement benefits offered through the NC State Health Plan and NC State Retirement System.
2. Teacher assistants who work in **nonpublic school** NC Pre-K programs and exceed NC Pre-K education requirements (currently hold AA/AAS in ECE) are eligible to receive a compensation package as defined in **Table 4**.

Compensation Packages for Nonpublic School Programs

1. Compensation packages must be equivalent to at least the **minimum compensation level** for eligible teachers and teacher assistants, as defined in **Tables 3 and 4**. The package may consist of a, b, or c and equal to the package amount.
 - a. Salary **only**, or
 - b. Salary **plus** health **or** retirement plans, **or**
 - c. Salary **plus** health **and** retirement plans.
2. Local nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs are required to move eligible teachers and teacher assistants from the **minimum to the target compensation level**, based on available state and local fiscal resources.
3. Teachers with less than the required education and experience, and teacher assistants with less than an associate's degree in early childhood education, who work in nonpublic school NC Pre-K programs, should be compensated based on salary and benefit targets defined by the site administrator.

**Table 3. Compensation Packages for Eligible Teachers Working in Nonpublic School Programs
B-K Licensure, Pre-school Add-on Licensure, Provisional B-K Licensure, Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License & BA/BS Degree**

Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Minimum Compensation	\$26,260	\$26,680	\$27,120	\$28,680	\$30,080	\$31,420	\$32,710	\$33,750	\$34,230	\$34,720	\$35,220	\$35,710	\$36,220	\$36,730	\$37,260	\$37,800
Compensation Target	\$30,900	\$31,322	\$31,786	\$33,392	\$34,834	\$36,215	\$37,543	\$38,615	\$39,109	\$39,614	\$40,129	\$40,633	\$41,159	\$41,684	\$42,230	\$42,786

Notes

- Minimum and Maximum Compensation Target (Salary and Benefits) Packages** based on North Carolina Public School Salary Schedules for Certified Employees - Bachelor’s Degree Certified Teacher Salary **Schedule 5th Pay Period 2005-2006**. For Minimum Compensation Tables for more than 15 years of service, see: <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/fbs/finance/salary/schedules/2005-06schedulespayperiod5.pdf>
- Health benefit calculation based on 2005-2006 NC State Health Plan rate **\$321 per month** (12 months of employment).
- Retirement benefit calculation based on **3% of annual salary**.
- Compensation scale assumes a 40-hour work week for 36 weeks (10-month school year) (1,440 hours: includes 6-6 ½ hours direct child contact, plus related instructional planning, home visits, family conferences, professional development activities – See Section 6. b).
- Employer and employee state and federal taxes are not included in these figures.
- County supplements are determined by the Local NCPRE-K Committee.
- Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License** – Granted to a teacher with a BA/BS degree in child development, early childhood or a related field (human development and family studies, or psychology), and at least a 2.5 GPA. Upon completion of B-K requirements teacher recommended for a B-K Standard Professional I or II license.
- Provisional B-K Licensure** – Granted to a teacher with another North Carolina license. Ex: Teacher with K-6 license approved for a provisional B-K or Preschool Add-on. Upon completion of B-K requirements teacher recommended for a B-K Standard Professional I or II license and/or Preschool Add-on License.
- Teaching Experience** – One year of full time (at least 30 hours/week) teaching experience in a public or nonpublic setting is given for each increment (step) on the state salary schedule. Experience is determined by the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) at the time the license is issued. Teachers should be placed at the “0” level of experience until the DPI Licensure Section computes “years of experience,” which are denoted on the license document mailed to the teacher. Teacher’s salary would move to the appropriate step of **Table 3** upon receipt of license.

**Table 4. Compensation Packages for Teacher Assistants Working in Nonpublic School Programs
AA/AAS Degree in Early Childhood Education**

Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Minimum Compensation	\$15,810	\$16,063	\$16,328	\$17,267	\$18,110	\$18,917	\$19,693	\$20,319	\$20,608	\$20,903	\$21,204	\$21,499	\$21,806	\$22,114	\$22,433	\$22,758
Compensation Target	\$20,136	\$20,397	\$20,670	\$21,637	\$22,505	\$23,337	\$24,136	\$24,781	\$25,078	\$25,382	\$25,692	\$25,996	\$26,312	\$26,629	\$26,958	\$27,293

Revised September 13, 2006 – Minimum Compensation and Compensation Target (based on a 10-month school year)

Notes

1. **Minimum and Maximum Compensation Target (Salary & Benefits) Packages** based on Fiscal Year **2005-2006** North Carolina Public Schools Salary Schedules - Curriculum Support Personnel Salary Grades for Teacher Assistants with at least AA/AAS degree.
2. Health benefit calculation based on **2005-2006** NC State Health Plan rate **\$321 per month** (12 months of employment).
3. Retirement benefit calculation based on 3% of annual salary.
4. Compensation scale assumes a 40-hour work week for 36 weeks (10-month school year). NC Pre-K teacher assistants work 37.5-40 hours a week for 36 weeks.
5. Employer and employee state and federal taxes are not included in these figures.
6. Teaching Experience – One year of full time teaching assistant experience (at least 30 hours/week) in a public or nonpublic setting is given for each step in **Table 4**.

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-R Assessments

Beginning July 2012, all NC Pre-K licensed programs in public schools and private child care facilities will be required to have an ECERS-R assessment every 3 years. This will be conducted at the time of the star rated license reassessment. At least one of the classrooms chosen for ECERS-R assessment must be a NC Pre-K classroom.

NC Pre-K classrooms must score a **minimum of 5.0**. Classrooms that receive less than 5.0 will be contacted by the Division of Child Development and Early Education and are required to submit a plan demonstrating how the minimum rating will be accomplished by the following year of operation. Classrooms have one year to improve quality.

B. Reported Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations

The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education will notify local Contract Administrators of an open abuse and neglect investigation occurring in a NC Pre-K site.

The NC Pre-K site in question may continue operating the NC Pre-K classroom until the investigation and resolution are complete. If the allegation of abuse and/or neglect is substantiated, NC Pre-K funds may be terminated where there is substantiation of abuse and neglect that jeopardize the health and safety of children enrolled in the program.

In some cases, NC Pre-K Program payments will continue through the appeals process. However, NC Pre-K funds will be terminated when the participating NC Pre-K site child care facility license has been suspended or revoked. Any substantiation of child abuse or neglect, or any administrative action resulting in a change of the license status, may determine future eligibility in the NC Pre-K program.

C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local NC Pre-K Programs

The Division of Child Development and Early Education, local Contract Administrators, and site administrators are required to monitor for compliance with the NC Pre-K program and fiscal and contract requirements.

Monitoring by the Division of Child Development and Early Education

In addition to monitoring child care requirements, DCDEE child care consultants will monitor for compliance with specific NC Pre-K program requirements. Results of DCDEE monitoring will be sent to the Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Monitoring Tools

Monitoring tools developed by the Division of Child Development and Early Education must be used at the local level for self-review and verification of compliance with the operating requirements.

a. NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool), completed by the site administrator (or designee), is designed to provide checklists of those components of the program that

When	What	Who
February 1 – May 15	DCDEE Administration Section staff review Site Tools and Contractor Tool results with local Contract Administrators by desk audits and/or visits to the local Contract Administrator.	DCDEE Personnel
By May 31	Action Plans (timeline/who completes each task) for items that do not meet the Program Requirements and/or Fiscal Guidelines, sign, date, and mail to the Division of Child Development and Early Education office.	Local Contract Administrator (or designee)
By June 15	Mail copy of Contractor Tool, with any comments from DCDEE , to the local Contractor. (Original copy filed in the state office.) Monitoring results reported to the Local NC Pre-K Committee.	DCDEE Administration Section Contract Personnel Local Contractor

E. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

State Responsibility

Local NC Pre-K administrative programs are subject to monitoring visits by the DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis Office to verify children’s eligibility for the TANF/MOE match. Criteria to be monitored are collected in the NC Pre-K Reporting System (NC Pre-K Kids) database, which are entered and updated monthly by the local NC Pre-K program contract administrator.

Procedures include:

1. The DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis and the Division of Child Development and Early Education will work together to select a random sample of local NC Pre-K programs and individual sites to be monitored.
2. The DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis, in consultation with the DCDEE, will send a notification letter of a pending site visit with information about how the visit will be scheduled and conducted.
3. Each local program will receive a list of clients’ files to be monitored.
4. Each local program may request a copy of the TANF/MOE Record Review Form and Record Review Guide as needed.

Only the state is impacted by the monitoring results. Local programs are not impacted fiscally by a finding of an ineligible TANF/MOE child.

Local Responsibility

Periodically, local programs must verify and update child information in NC Pre-K Kids. (NC Pre-K Kids automatically determines TANF eligible children based on the data entered in the system.)