Public Pre-K Application FAQ & Site Administrator Support Guide

2027–2028 School Year

For Current and Prospective Public Pre-K Sites

Welcome

Applying to participate as a Public Pre-K site in Mecklenburg County involves providing information about your facility, staffing, program quality, accessibility, family support, and readiness to operate a publicly-funded Pre-K classroom.

This guide is designed to help Site Administrators:

- Understand what information is being requested in the application
- Know what documentation may need to be submitted

> **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**
> **Use it before and during the application to know what to gather, what to submit, and when to ask for support.**

- Prepare before beginning the application
- Understand how certain responses relate to the site selection rubric
- Avoid common application errors
- Identify questions that may require additional preparation or support

Important: This guide is a support resource and does not replace the official NC Pre-K application, NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance, DCDEE requirements, or other official guidance.

QUICK START: Before You Begin

Before starting the application, gather the following information and documents.

Site Information

☐ DCDEE Facility ID Number
☐ Current facility license type
☐ Federal Tax ID number
☐ Facility and mailing addresses
☐ Facility phone/fax information
☐ Elementary school district
☐ Site classification

Slot Information

☐ Number of slots requested for 2027–2028
☐ Number of classrooms requested
☐ Information about available classroom space
☐ Recruitment plan for identifying unserved children
☐ Estimated number of currently enrolled children who will be age-eligible for NC Pre-K

Program Standards

☐ Current NC child care license information
☐ Administrative Action history
☐ Child maltreatment complaint history
☐ Licensing complaint history
☐ Most recent ECERS-R score(s) and assessment dates

Education Standards

☐ Site Administrator information
☐ Administrator degree and major
☐ Early childhood semester hours
☐ Administrative experience
☐ Administrator credential documentation
☐ Lead Teacher names and education/licensure information
☐ Teacher Assistant names and education/licensure information

Geographic, Accessibility and Affordability

☐ Developmental screening information
☐ Hearing screening information
☐ Dental screening information
☐ Vision screening information
☐ Extended care/wrap-around information
☐ Subsidy voucher information
☐ Meal and snack information
☐ Transportation information

Classroom and Family Support

☐ Current lesson plan from within the last 30 days
☐ NC Foundations training information
☐ Approved curriculum information
☐ Assessment instrument information

Written Plans

Prepare copies of applicable written plans for:

☐ Supporting children/families who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency
☐ Preventing suspension/expulsion and supporting children with disabilities or challenging behaviors
☐ Family engagement
☐ Transition to Pre-K, out of Pre-K, and into Kindergarten
☐ Transportation for families without transportation, if applicable

Additional Program Information

☐ NC Pre-K classroom schedule
☐ Start and end times
☐ Earliest drop-off and latest pick-up times
☐ Staff work schedule
☐ B-K licensure/BTSP or EES information
☐ Classroom ratio and class size information
☐ Playground information
☐ Other resources used to support NC Pre-K expenses

SITE INFORMATION

What basic information will I need to provide?

The application asks for basic identifying information about the site, including:

- Site/school name
- DCDEE Facility ID Number
- Facility license type
- Administrator name and title
- Administrator email
- Street and mailing address

- Phone and fax number
- Site classification
- Federal Tax ID number
- Elementary school district

What site classifications are available?

The application provides the following choices:

- Public School
- Head Start – Public School
- Private Non-Profit Child Care/Head Start
- Private For-Profit Child Care
- Developmental Day Program
- Charter School

Tip: *Select the classification that accurately describes the entity applying to operate the Public Pre-K classroom.*

SLOT INFORMATION

How do I indicate whether my site is new or existing?

You will identify whether your facility is:

- A **New NC Pre-K Site**
- An **Existing NC Pre-K Site**
- A **Previous NC Pre-K/MAF Site**

Existing sites will also provide the number of NC Pre-K slots allocated during the previous school year.

What information is needed if I am requesting additional slots or applying as a new site?

The application asks how the additional classroom capacity will be created, including:

- New slots resulting from facility expansion or empty rooms
- New slots in school-age classrooms that are vacant during school hours
- New slots in existing four-year-old classrooms
- New slots in rooms currently occupied by another age group

Tip: *Be prepared to explain exactly where the requested classroom/slots will be located.*

What is a recruitment plan?

Sites applying for NC Pre-K should be prepared to explain how they will identify and recruit children who are not currently being served.

Your recruitment plan should clearly describe how your site will reach eligible families and identify children who may need access to NC Pre-K.

PROGRAM STANDARDS

What facility license is required?

The application asks sites to identify their current license status.

The rubric assigns points based on:

License Status	Rubric Points
Five-Star License	5
Four-Star License	3
Temporary	1

What compliance history will I need to report?

The application asks whether the site has received an **Administrative Action from DCDEE within the last 18 months**.

It also asks whether the site has had:

- A substantiated child maltreatment complaint within the last 18 months
- A substantiated licensing complaint within the last 18 months

These questions should be answered accurately based on the site's documented history.

What ECERS-R information is needed?

Sites should provide their most recent NC Pre-K ECERS-R score(s) and assessment date(s).

New sites should provide the most recent ECERS-R score(s) for evaluated classrooms at the site, when applicable.

The rubric identifies **above 5.0** as the standard for these scored items.

Prepare: Have the actual score and assessment date available before beginning the application.

SITE ADMINISTRATOR QUALIFICATIONS

What information is required about the Site Administrator?

The application asks for:

- Administrator name
- Highest degree earned
- Major
- Number of semester hours in early childhood
- Number of years of administrative experience
- Administrator credential

What administrator credentials are listed?

The application includes:

- NC Early Childhood Administrator Credential Level I
- NC Early Childhood Administrator Credential Level II
- NC Early Childhood Administrator Credential Level III
- Working toward an NC Early Childhood Administrator Credential
- NC Principal License
- BA/BS in any field with specified early childhood and administration coursework

If working toward an administrator credential, the application asks you to specify the level being pursued.

Does administrator experience affect the rubric?

Yes. The rubric assigns points based on administrator credential and experience.

The highest rubric standard listed is:

Level III credential + 5 or more years of experience

Other rubric categories include Level III with 3–4 years, Level III with 1–2 years, Level II, and Level I.

Tip: *Have documentation available to support the credential information entered on the application.*

LEAD TEACHERS & TEACHER ASSISTANTS

What information is required for Lead Teachers?

The application asks for:

- Names of Lead Teachers
- Education/licensure information

The rubric distinguishes among:

- Continuing B-K
- Initial B-K
- Other license and eligible for Provisional B-K
- Bachelor's degree and working toward B-K
- Bachelor's degree with no Plan of Study
- No teacher/not meeting standards

What information is required for Teacher Assistants?

The application asks for names and education information.

Rubric categories include:

- Bachelor's degree
- Associate degree and bachelor's credit hours
- Associate degree
- CDA and working toward Associate degree
- CDA or working toward Associate degree
- No teacher/not meeting standards

What should I do if staffing is not finalized?

Make sure you understand what the application requires before entering staffing information. If a position is vacant or a staff member does not currently meet a listed standard, do not guess or enter information that is not accurate.

Support Tip: Contact the appropriate NC Pre-K support contact if you are unsure how to report a pending hire, licensure status, or staff member working toward a credential.

GEOGRAPHIC, ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

What developmental screening information is requested?

The application asks whether the site provides on-site developmental screenings.

If yes, the site identifies the screening instrument currently used.

The listed instruments include:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
- Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)
- Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL)
- Brigance Early Childhood Screen
- No approved developmental screening used

What health-related screenings are addressed?

The application asks whether the site provides free:

- Hearing screenings
- Dental screenings
- Vision screenings

The rubric awards points for sites that provide these services.

What is wrap-around/extended care?

The application asks whether your site offers care:

- Before school
- After school
- Both before and after school
- During times when NC Pre-K is not in session

Sites are also asked about:

- Holiday care
- Teacher workday care
- Summer care
- Rates for extended care
- Separate morning/afternoon charges
- School break rates
- Summer rates

Does accepting subsidy matter?

Yes. The application asks whether the site accepts subsidy vouchers for children needing extended and full-day care.

The rubric awards points for accepting subsidy vouchers.

What should I consider when answering the extended-care questions?

Think about the **full family experience**, not just the NC Pre-K classroom.

Be prepared to explain:

- When care is available
- What it costs
- Whether subsidy is accepted
- Whether care is available when NC Pre-K is not in session
- Whether families can access both before- and after-school care

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What meal information is requested?

The application asks whether your site provides free:

- Meals for all children
- Snacks for all children

If the site does not currently provide free meals/snacks, the application asks whether the site would be willing to provide them to all NC Pre-K children.

What does the rubric consider?

The rubric identifies:

- Free meals AND snack

- Free meals

as scored standards.

Tip: *Make sure the response accurately reflects what the site currently provides rather than what the site hopes to provide in the future.*

What transportation questions are included?

The application asks whether your site can provide transportation services and whether transportation can be provided at no cost.

It also asks:

What if we cannot provide transportation?

Answer the application questions honestly and provide information about what support would be needed.

The application also includes a separate written-plan question regarding transportation for families who do not have a means of transporting their child to/from Pre-K.

What does the application ask about lesson planning?

The application asks whether classroom staff align lesson plans and learning experiences with the **NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development**.

If yes, the site must submit a recent completed lesson plan from within the last 30 days.

What should I submit as my lesson plan?

Submit a **recent, completed lesson plan** that demonstrates how learning experiences are connected to the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development.

Before submitting, check:

☐ The plan is from within the last 30 days
☐ It is completed rather than a blank template
☐ It demonstrates intentional planning
☐ It reflects developmental domains/learning goals
☐ It represents the classroom's actual practice

Who needs NC Foundations training?

The application asks whether the following staff have received training on the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development:

- Site Administrator(s)
- Lead Teacher(s)
- Teacher Assistant(s)

What curriculum information is required?

You will select the approved curriculum currently used by your facility from the list provided in the application.

What assessment information is required?

You will select the assessment instrument currently used by your facility from the approved list provided in the application.

Tip: *Confirm the exact curriculum and assessment instrument your classroom uses before beginning the application.*

Several application questions require the site to describe its current plan and submit a copy of the written plan.

What written plans should I prepare to submit?

1. Language Access Plan

Describe how your site communicates with and supports children and families who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency.

Include available community resources.

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2. Behavior, Disability & Suspension/Expulsion Prevention Plan

Describe your approach to:

- Preventing suspension and expulsion
- Supporting children with challenging behaviors
- Supporting children with identified disabilities
- Identifying supports needed to successfully serve children

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3. Family Engagement Plan

Describe how your site will:

- Build partnerships with families
- Develop reciprocal relationships
- Promote shared decision-making
- Engage families in meaningful ways

The rubric considers the number of family engagement activities identified.

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4. Transition Plan

Describe how your site supports children's transitions:

- Into Pre-K
- Out of Pre-K
- Into Kindergarten

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5. Transportation Plan

Describe your plan for families who do not have a means of transporting their child to and from Pre-K.

Why does the application ask about compensation?

NC Pre-K has specific compensation expectations for instructional staff.

For nonpublic schools, the application asks about teacher compensation and benefits in relation to the NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance.

Possible responses include:

- Currently Meet
- Do Not Meet
- Plan to Meet

The rubric considers compensation structures such as:

- NC Public School Schedule & Benefits
- NC Public School Schedule & No Benefits
- NCDPI Teacher Salary Schedule & 4+ benefit choices
- NCDPI Teacher Salary Schedule & 1–3 benefit choices
- NCDPI Teacher Salary Schedule & No Benefits

Public school applicants are asked about compensation according to NC Public School Salary Schedules.

Tip: *If you are unsure which compensation category applies to your site, gather your current salary and benefits information before completing this section.*

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

How many hours must the NC Pre-K program operate?

The application states that NC Pre-K sites must provide a Pre-K program for a minimum of:

6.5 hours per day for 10 months / 36 weeks of instructional days per school calendar year.

You will indicate whether your site:

- Currently meets the requirement
- Does not currently meet the requirement
- Plans to meet the requirement

If the site does not currently meet the requirement, an explanation of the plan to meet it is requested.

What daily schedule information is required?

Provide:

- NC Pre-K classroom start time
- NC Pre-K classroom end time
- Earliest drop-off time
- Latest pick-up time

Be clear about whether children are receiving wrap-around services when identifying the earliest drop-off and latest pick-up times.

What are the NC Pre-K instructional staff work-hour expectations listed in the application?

The application states that instructional staff must work in direct contact with NC Pre-K children for at least **32.5 hours per week**.

The remaining **7.5 hours** are for related instructional activities.

The application also states that Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants are not to exceed **40 hours per week** unless choosing to do so voluntarily for additional compensation.

Sites must indicate whether they:

- Currently meet
- Do not meet
- Plan to meet

the requirement.

What does the application ask about B-K licensure?

The application states that NC Pre-K Lead Teachers must meet B-K licensure requirements for the Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP) to maintain the B-K license through the Local Education Agency (LEA) or Early Educator Support (EES) Unit.

For Lead Teachers employed in nonpublic schools, the application states that the teacher must be enrolled with the EES Unit.

The site must indicate whether it:

- Currently meets the requirement
- Does not meet the requirement
- Plans to meet the requirement

What classroom ratio is identified in the application?

The application states that NC Pre-K classrooms will not exceed:

1 staff member to 10 children

with a maximum class size of:

20 children

Each classroom is expected to have:

- One Lead Teacher
- One Teacher Assistant

Can a classroom have fewer than 20 children?

Yes. The application specifically asks whether the site is financially able to offer a smaller class size or lower ratio when required for children with special needs/IEPs.

This recognizes that some children with Individualized Education Programs may require different classroom supports.

What playground information is required?

The application asks whether the site has a:

Dedicated, age-appropriate, fenced playground space for Pre-K children.

Answer based on the actual facility configuration.

If your playground is shared, ask for clarification if you are uncertain whether the space meets the application requirement.

Why does the application ask about other resources?

NC Pre-K policy requires sites to demonstrate that they are accessing other resources to help cover expenses associated with operating the NC Pre-K program.

Examples identified in the application include:

- Subsidy vouchers for before/after school care
- Grants
- In-kind contributions from the facility
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Other resources

What should I include?

List the resources your site actually uses or expects to use to support NC Pre-K-related expenses.

Attach supporting documentation when requested.

COMMON QUESTIONS BEFORE SUBMITTING

"Can I save the application and come back to it?"

Confirm the functionality of the current application platform before beginning. If the application does not clearly indicate how saving/progress works, contact the designated application support contact before closing the application.

"What if I don't know the answer to a question?"

Do not guess.

First:

1. Review your facility records.
2. Ask the appropriate staff member.
3. Review the supporting documentation.
4. Contact the designated NC Pre-K/Smart Start support contact if clarification is needed.

"What if something doesn't apply to my site?"

Read the question carefully and use the available response options. If there is no clear "Not Applicable" option and you believe the question does not apply, seek clarification rather than entering an inaccurate response.

"Can I change my application after submitting it?"

Follow the current application instructions regarding edits and submission. If you discover an error after submission, contact the designated application support contact as soon as possible.

"Does every question receive rubric points?"

No.

Some application questions as directly associated with rubric standards and points, while other questions collect information needed to understand the site's operations, capacity, services, or readiness.

Do not assume that a question without listed points is unimportant. Information collected through the application may still be necessary for the site selection process.

APPLICATION PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Before Opening the Application

☐ Confirm the person completing the application has access to all required information.
☐ Gather facility/license information.
☐ Gather administrator credential information.
☐ Gather staff education/licensure information.
☐ Gather ECERS-R results.
☐ Review current curriculum and assessment information.
☐ Locate a recent completed lesson plan.
☐ Gather written plans.
☐ Confirm classroom space and requested slots.
☐ Confirm proposed classroom schedule.
☐ Review extended-care services and rates.
☐ Confirm screening services.
☐ Confirm transportation options.
☐ Review meal/snack services.
☐ Confirm playground information.
☐ Gather compensation and benefits information.
☐ Identify other resources used to support NC Pre-K expenses.

DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

Before submitting, verify that you have the applicable supporting documents.

Document/Information	Have It Ready
Administrator credential documentation	☐
ECERS-R score(s) and date(s)	☐
Recent completed lesson plan	☐
Language access plan	☐
Behavior/disability support plan	☐

Document/Information	Have It Ready
Family engagement plan	☐
Transition plan	☐
Transportation plan	☐
Staff licensure/education information	☐
Curriculum information	☐
Assessment information	☐
Compensation/benefits information	☐
Other resource documentation	☐

BEFORE YOU CLICK SUBMIT

Accuracy Check

☐ All names are spelled correctly.
☐ DCDEE Facility ID is correct.
☐ Contact information is current.
☐ Requested slot numbers are correct.
☐ Number of classrooms requested is correct.
☐ Staff information reflects current staffing.
☐ Licensure information is accurate.
☐ ECERS-R scores and dates are accurate.
☐ All Yes/No questions have been answered.
☐ All required written plans are attached.
☐ The lesson plan is recent and completed.
☐ Curriculum and assessment selections are accurate.
☐ Program hours are accurate.
☐ Staff work hours are accurate.
☐ Ratio/class size information is accurate.
☐ Transportation information is accurate.
☐ Meal/snack information is accurate.
☐ Extended-care information is accurate.
☐ Other resource information is complete.

NEED HELP?

When requesting assistance, help us help you quickly.

Include:

1. Site Name
2. DCDEE Facility ID
3. Application Section
4. Question/Item You Are Completing
5. What You Are Unsure About
6. Screenshot of the question, if applicable

Example Support Request

Site: Queen City Learning Center
Facility ID: XXXXX
Section: Education Standards – Site Administrator
Question: Administrator Credential
Question: I am unsure which credential category applies because our administrator is currently working toward Level II. What documentation should be submitted?

Providing this information will help the support team respond more efficiently.

QUICK REFERENCE: APPLICATION SECTIONS

Application Section	Main Topics
Site Information	Facility and contact information
Slot Information	Existing/new site, slots, classrooms, recruitment
Program Standards	License, complaints, Administrative Action, ECERS-R
Education Standards	Administrator and classroom staff qualifications
Geographic, Accessibility & Affordability	Screenings, extended care, nutrition, transportation
Classroom & Family Support	Curriculum, assessment, family engagement, written plans
Additional Program Information	Hours, staffing, ratios, playground, resources

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A FINAL REMINDER

The strongest application is one that is **accurate, complete, and supported by documentation**.

Before submitting, Site Administrators should review each response carefully and make sure the information provided reflects the site's **current operations and capacity to implement the NC Pre-K program**.

When a question is unclear, **ask before guessing.**