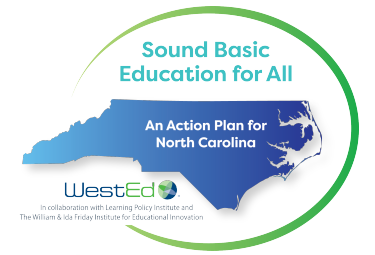


Early Childhood Education in North Carolina

Findings and Recommendations from the *Leandro* Report

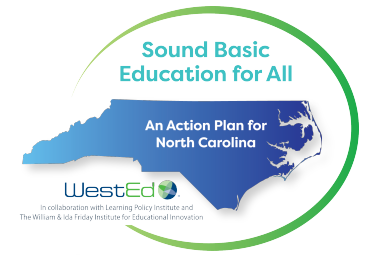


Andrea Browning, Senior Policy Advisor
Gerrit Westervelt, Director, Early Childhood Policy and Development
Jennifer Brooks, Social Impact Advisor (Independent)



About WestEd

- **Nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency**
- **Mission: work with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults**
- **Offices nationwide, with staff of 700+**



The WestEd Project and Process

- **WestEd appointed by Judge W. David Lee on March 7, 2018**
 - Independent consultant to develop detailed, comprehensive recommendations for specific actions necessary to achieve sustained compliance with constitutional mandates of the *Leandro* decision
- **Collaborators: Learning Policy Institute and the Friday Institute**
- **Three phases of work over 18 months**
 - 1) Data collection
 - 2) Data analysis
 - 3) Development of findings and recommendations

The Stakeholders



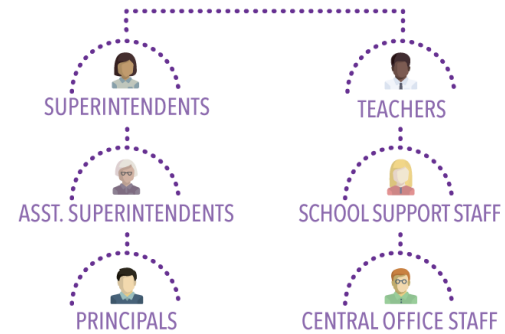
44 Counties Represented

ALL 8 Regions Visited

- Alamance County
- Alleghany County
- Buncombe County
- Burke County
- Chatham County
- Chowan County
- Clay County
- Craven County
- Cumberland County
- Davidson County
- Davie County
- Durham County
- Edgecombe County
- Forsyth County
- Franklin County
- Gaston County
- Granville County
- Greene County
- Guilford County
- Halifax County
- Haywood County
- Henderson County

- Hoke County
- Hyde County
- Johnston County
- Lincoln County
- Mecklenburg County
- Northampton County
- Onslow County
- Orange County
- Pasquotank County
- Pitt County
- Polk County
- Randolph County
- Robeson County
- Rowan County
- Rutherford County
- Scotland County
- Surry County
- Swain County
- Union County
- Vance County
- Wake County
- Washington County

1,270 Educators Engaged



60+ Other Education Stakeholders Engaged

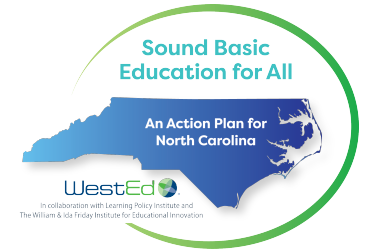
community leaders; elected officials; Department of Public Instruction staff; members of local education associations; parents; state commission members; philanthropists; representatives of higher education; State Board of Education members; and others

The Product

- **Comprehensive report and action plan**
- **Executive summary of full report**
- **13 individual study papers**



Sound Basic Education for All – Comprehensive Report and Action Plan



Comprehensive report includes:

- All findings and recommendations grouped into eight critical need areas
- A staged action plan that provides sequencing of recommendations
- Cost estimates to help inform the level of investment for the report's major recommendations
- Summaries of individual studies included as appendices

Monitoring the State's Compliance

Adequate, Equitable, and Aligned Finance and Resource Allocation

Regional/Statewide Supports for School Improvement

A Qualified and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom

State Assessment System and School Accountability System

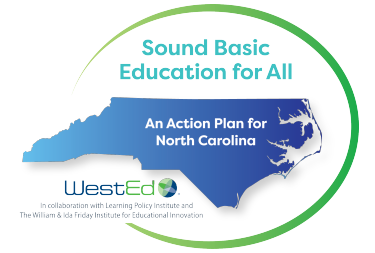
A Qualified and Well-Prepared Principal in Every School

Support for High-Poverty Schools

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

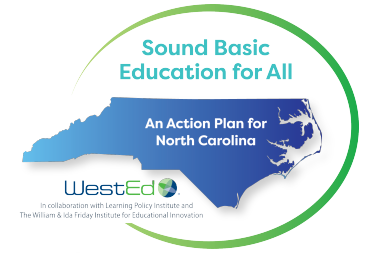


Where Is Early Childhood Education Addressed?



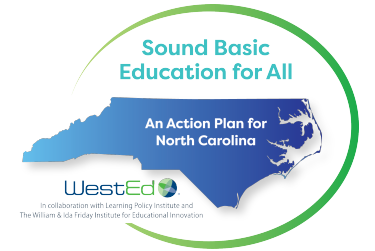
- **Critical Need: High-Quality Early Childhood Education**
 - *Provide all at-risk students with the opportunity to attend high-quality early childhood programs. These programs should develop all students' personal, social, cognitive, and language skills in order to prepare her or him to begin kindergarten fully ready to learn.*
- **Individual study papers**
 - High-Poverty Schools Study, Finance and Resource Allocation Study, et al.

Other Critical Need Areas with Relevance to Early Childhood Education



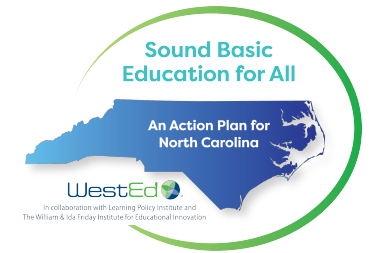
- **Adequate, Equitable, and Aligned Finance and Resource Allocation**
- **A Qualified and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom**
- **A Qualified and Well-Prepared Principal in Every School**
- **Support for High-Poverty Schools**
- **Regional/Statewide Supports for School Improvement**

High-Quality Early Childhood Education in North Carolina – Study Brief



- **Used existing data from multiple studies**
- **Also integrated early childhood–related findings from individual studies to inform the comprehensive report**
- **Study brief included as appendix in comprehensive report**

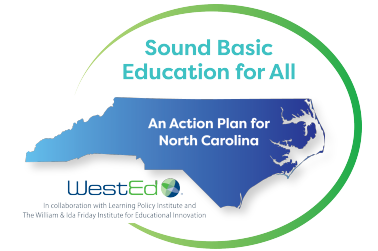
High-Quality Early Childhood Education in North Carolina – Study Brief



- **Research topics**

- The status of early childhood programs in North Carolina
- Access to high-quality early childhood programs for economically disadvantaged young children
- Barriers that prevent economically disadvantaged children from having access to high-quality programs
- Existing capacities and opportunities that could be built upon to ensure economically disadvantaged children have access to and participate in high-quality early childhood programs

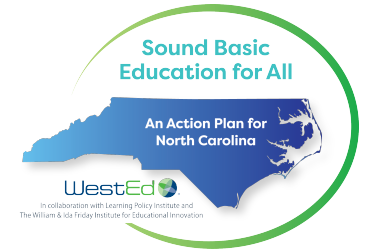
High-Quality Early Childhood Education in North Carolina – Study Brief



- **Key studies and data sources**

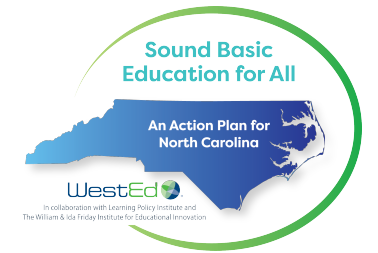
- Jennifer Brooks (for LPI) – workforce, geographic distribution of programs
- Clive Belfield (for LPI) – cost effectiveness of early childhood education
- Steve Barnett/NIEER – barriers to NC Pre-K expansion
- Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative
- NC Early Childhood Action Plan
- State and federal data sources (e.g., Dept. of Commerce, U.S. Census)
- WestEd site visits, focus groups, and interviews

Findings



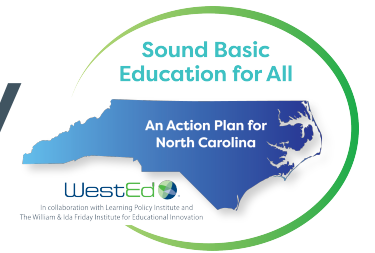
1. High-quality early childhood education is available in North Carolina.
2. Participation in high-quality early childhood education varies in North Carolina, and lower-wealth communities often lack an adequate supply of early childhood programs.
3. Costs and other challenges for communities and families create barriers to accessing early childhood education.
4. Lack of ability to supply the necessary numbers of qualified teachers is an additional barrier to expansion of and increased access to early childhood education.
5. The transition from early childhood education environments to K–12 environments is challenging for children and families.

High-Quality Early Childhood Education Is Available and Impactful

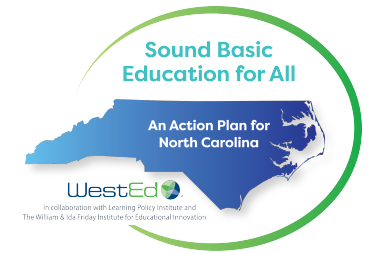


- **Substantial gains for participating children (Ladd et al.)**
 - By Grade 5, Smart Start and More at Four participation afforded a child 6.2 cumulative months of reading gains and 3.3 months in math gains
 - Associated with significant reduction in grade retention and special education placement
 - Academic gains persisted through middle school
- **NC Pre-K associated with student gains**
 - Students exceeded developmental benchmarks in language and literacy, mathematics, general knowledge and behavior skills (Wechsler)
 - Reduced rates of grade repetition through elementary school (Dodge et al.)

Participation in High-Quality ECE Varies by Community



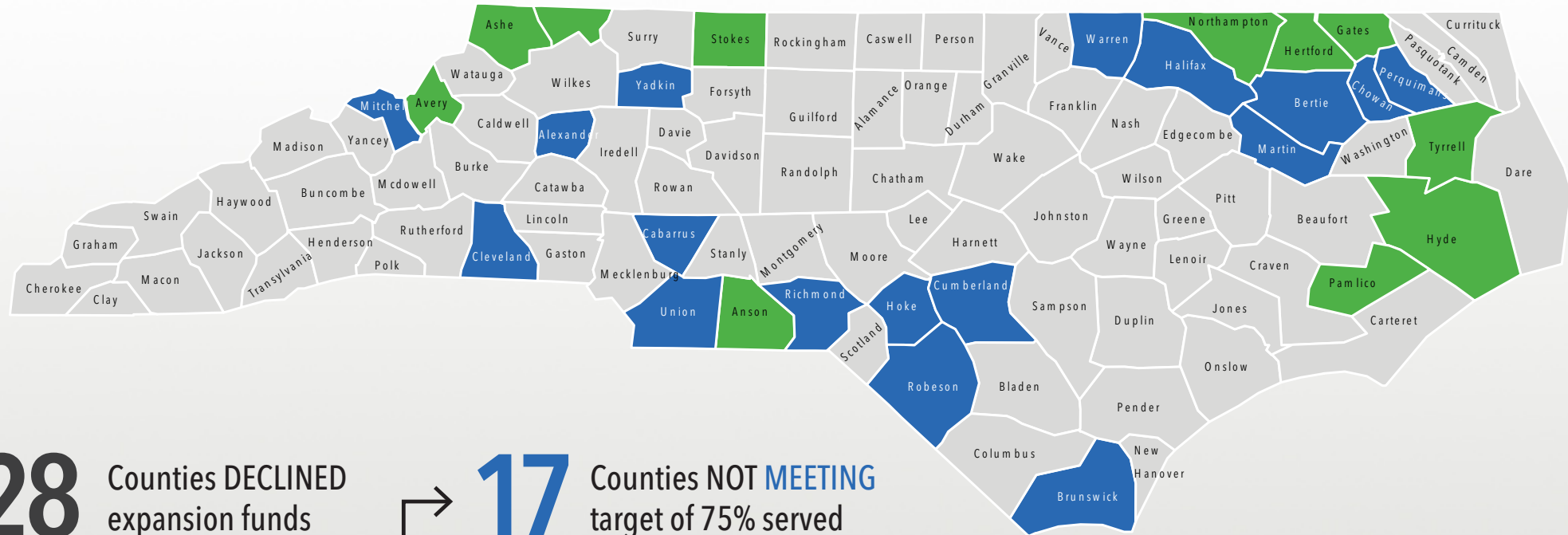
- Participation varies in NC, and lower-wealth communities often lack an adequate supply of early childhood programs
- 50% of all preschool-aged children do not attend any preschool, a licensed program, or a 4- or 5-star QRIS-rated program
- Unmet need for NC Pre-K = 33,000 children per year (Barnett)
- Most pronounced in low-income communities
 - Eligible, unserved children disproportionately in urban counties
 - Inconsistency in rural counties, ranging from 11% to 80% served
- 50,000 children/families are on waiting lists for early childhood subsidies (Barnett)



Costs and Other Challenges for Communities and Families Create Barriers to Accessing ECE

- 2011 cut to Smart Start (20%) never restored in budget
- Average NC Pre-K cost per child is \$9,100; state's current contribution is \$5,200 per child
- 28 counties (of 100) declined NC Pre-K expansion funding in **both** 2017 and 2018 citing lack of:
 - The necessary number of qualified teachers to fill teaching slots
 - Enough eligible/high-quality private programs to meet the need
 - The ability to meet the local funding match requirement
 - Transportation that enables families and program staff to get to centers

Costs and Other Challenges for Communities and Families Create Barriers to Accessing ECE



28 Counties DECLINED expansion funds

17 Counties NOT MEETING target of 75% served

11 Counties MEETING target of 75% served

Lack of Qualified Teachers Creates ECE Barrier

- Lack of ability to supply the necessary numbers of qualified teachers is an additional barrier to expansion and increased access to ECE.
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship and Child Care WAGE\$ Program help reduce costs of attaining a higher education degree in early childhood.
- Turnover in the early childhood workforce is high.
 - NC Pre-K has relatively stringent policies for teacher qualification
 - 39% of teachers and teaching assistants report that they had received some form of public assistance (e.g., SNAP, TANF)
 - Early childhood teacher salary is far lower than kindergarten teacher salary—median kindergarten teacher wage is almost 2.5 times higher

Challenging Transition from ECE to K–12

- The transition from early childhood education environments to K–12 environments is challenging for children and families.
- Few elementary principals have training in early childhood development.
- Elementary school environments are often not equipped to support young children’s developmental transition into K–12.
- Schools lack the appropriate and proportional staffing of school support staff such as nurses, social workers, and counselors.

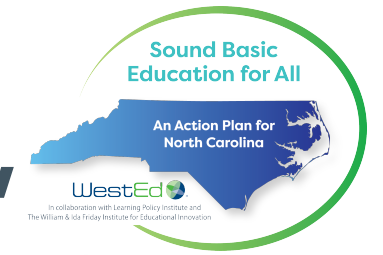
Recommendations

- Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline.
- Scale up Smart Start to increase quality, access, and support for at-risk children and families.
- Expand NC Pre-K to provide high-quality, full-day, full-year services to all at-risk 4-year-old children.
- Align and improve early-grade K–12 settings to support successful transitions to K–3 and promote early-grade success.

Increase the Volume and Quality of the Early Childhood Educator Pipeline

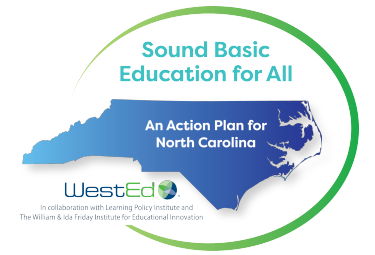


- Link compensation packages to public school schedules and align to comparable professions.
- Expand the WAGE\$ and AWARDS programs to support salary schedule growth.
- Provide supplemental funds for NC Pre-K teacher compensation to achieve parity between private centers and public schools.
- Scale up high-quality professional development, including in trauma-informed care, social-emotional development, and early literacy.
- Expand workforce through recruiting and scholarship programs.



Scale Up Smart Start to Increase Quality, Access, and Support for At-Risk Children and Families

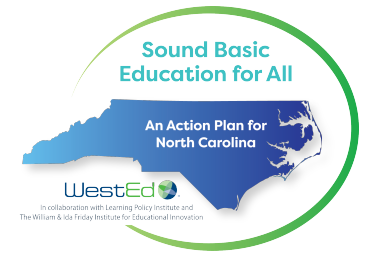
- Increase Smart Start allocation to account for rising costs and address specific barriers to program expansion, including start-up costs.
- Adjust Smart Start funding to ensure the most effective use of dollars to meet the local support needs of children and families.
- Phase-in increases to move toward the original goal of meeting 25% of student and family need.
- Augment current funding and infrastructure for children aged 0–3 (e.g., home visits, child care subsidies, home-based child care, and private child care/Pre-K for eligible 3-year-olds).



Expand NC Pre-K to Provide High-Quality, Full-Day, Full-Year Services to All At-Risk 4-Year-Old Children

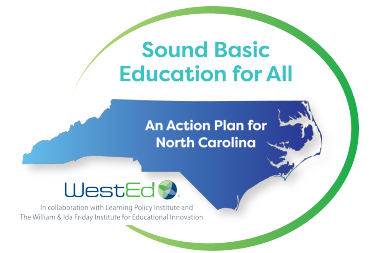
- Increase reimbursement rate to support full-day, full-year, high-quality services and adequate administrative costs.
- Implement an annual inflation cost adjustment for the program.
- Offer financial incentives for 4- to 5-star private Pre-Ks serving 4-year olds in high-poverty communities so they can meet the higher-quality standards to become NC Pre-K sites.
- Build and upgrade facilities to ensure enough high-quality spaces for NC Pre-K sites, either in public schools or community-based programs.
- Provide transportation for families to get to NC Pre-K sites.

Align and Improve Early-Grade K–12 Settings to Support Successful Transitions to K–3 and Promote Early-Grade Success



- Ensure that preschool providers support transitions from one setting to another and that K–12 settings have the appropriate knowledge and tools to intake and serve all children and families.
- Expand effective professional development for principals in early childhood education.
- Fully fund teaching assistants in the early grades (K–3) to ensure adequate student-to-staff ratios and effective instruction.
- Improve student access to specialized support personnel (e.g., nurses, counselors, psychologists) per nationally recommended ratios.

References & Resources



Barnett, W. S. (2019). Barriers to expansion of NC Pre-K: Problems and potential solutions. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Belfield, C. R. (2019). The effectiveness, efficiency, and economic value of early childhood education. (Prepared for the Learning Policy Institute).

WestEd Comprehensive Report and Action Plan:

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Executive Summary of Comprehensive Report:

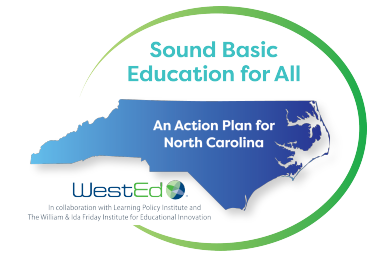
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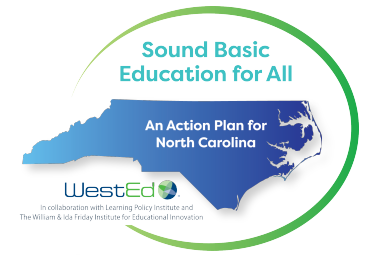
WestEd Individual Study Reports (listed on next slide):

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Exhibit 1. The 13 study reports produced by the Leandro research study teams

Overarching topic	Study report title
Access to effective educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Best Practices to Recruit and Retain Well-Prepared Teachers in All Classrooms</i> (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019) • <i>Developing and Supporting North Carolina's Teachers</i> (Minnici, Beatson, Berg-Jacobson, & Ennis, 2019) • <i>Educator Supply, Demand, and Quality in North Carolina: Current Status and Recommendations</i> (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019) • <i>How Teaching and Learning Conditions Affect Teacher Retention and School Performance in North Carolina</i> (Berry, Bastian, Darling-Hammond, & Kini, 2019) • <i>Retaining and Extending the Reach of Excellent Educators: Current Practices, Educator Perceptions, and Future Directions</i> (Smith & Hassel, 2019)
Access to effective school leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Attracting, Preparing, Supporting, and Retaining Education Leaders in North Carolina</i> (Koehler, Peterson & Agnew, 2019)
Adequate and equitable school funding and other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Study of Cost Adequacy, Distribution, and Alignment of Funding for North Carolina's K–12 Public Education System</i> (Willis et al., 2019) • <i>Addressing Leandro: Supporting Student Learning by Mitigating Student Hunger</i> (Bowden & Davis, 2019) • <i>High-Quality Early Childhood Education in North Carolina: A Fundamental Step to Ensure a Sound Basic Education</i> (Agnew, Brooks, Browning, & Westervelt, 2019) • <i>Leandro Action Plan: Ensuring a Sound Basic Education for All North Carolina Students Success Factors Study</i> (Townsend, Mullennix, Tyrone, & Samberg, 2019) • <i>Providing an Equal Opportunity for a Sound Basic Education in North Carolina's High-Poverty Schools: Assessing Needs and Opportunities</i> (Oakes et al., 2019)
Adequate accountability and assessment systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North Carolina's Statewide Accountability System: How to Effectively Measure Progress Toward Meeting the Leandro Tenets</i> (Cardichon, Darling-Hammond, Espinoza, & Kostyo, 2019) • <i>North Carolina's Statewide Assessment System: How Does the Statewide Assessment System Support Progress Toward Meeting the Leandro Tenets?</i> (Brunetti, Hemberg, Brandt, & McNeilly, 2019)





Questions?

Early Childhood Education: Cost Analysis

Primary Assumptions

- Investigates the costs associated with several findings and recommendations in the report including Smart Start and NC Pre-K
- Leveraged the best information that was available to the study team at the time
- The process of estimating costs is ongoing and continuing

Limitations

- Unlike the cost estimation for K-12 education, these cost analyses address some, but not all, of the recommendations

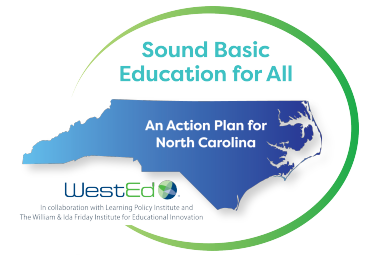
Cost Analysis: NC Pre-K

Provide high-quality, full-day, full-year services to all at-risk 4-year-olds by increasing reimbursement rates to cover:

- High-quality services
- Account for expanded full-day, full-year programming
- \$571 million per year after ramp-up

Require local NC Pre-K committees to include in their annual implementation a plan to increase the number of slots each year and goals and strategies for family outreach.

- \$172 million per year after ramp-up for increase subsidies



Cost Analysis: Smart Start

Fund Smart Start to enable communities to use the flexible funds to increase quality, access and support for all early childhood education students, including at-risk children and their families

- \$532 million per year after ramp-up for expansion to 25% of identified need