



What is NC Pre-K?

The NC Pre-Kindergarten 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 development 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.

Frequently asked Questions

1. With that being said...What is NC Pre-K?

NC Pre-K is a statewide pre-school program that provides a structured educational experience for at-risk four-year olds who meet the age requirement of being four years old on or before August 31, 2021, and meet one or more of the requirements, as defined in question 2 below.

2. What are the requirements for determining a child as being "at-risk"?

A child that meets the age requirements is eligible for NC Pre-K if the child meets at least one of the following criteria. The child is from a family whose gross income level is below 75% of the State Median Income level. If the family is over the income threshold, the child may qualify if one or more of the criteria identified here is applicable: child is experiencing homelessness; has an identified disability indicated by a current Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP); has Limited English Proficiency (LEP); has a developmental or educational need; has a chronic health condition; or has a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member in the armed forces, National Guard, or Reserve Unit or a child whose parent or legal guardian has been seriously injured or killed while on active duty. *Additional documentation may be required for children of families that are over the income guidelines.

3. Why must I provide personal information when applying for this program?

Smart Start Rowan (SSR) must follow state and local guidelines in order to process each child's application. These guidelines require that SSR obtain the information requested, which includes some personal information, in order to process the child's application. With this in mind, it is very important that you follow the application instructions and provide the exact information that is listed on the child application checklist. Without the information that has been requested, we will not be able to process your application, and it will be considered incomplete. Incomplete applications will **NOT** be considered for placement in the program.

4. How is my child chosen for the program?

All applications, once complete are date stamped and verified for eligibility, based on birth date and the criteria mentioned above in question 2. Each application is then given a priority score. After April 30th, the applications are first sorted by the priority score and then by date the completed application was received. Children with the highest scores will tentatively be placed. **Due to the number of applications received not every child can be placed at their desired location.** When funding has been approved and awarded by the State of North Carolina, notifications will be sent out to the family via email, stating which site the child has been placed at. The family must notify Smart Start Rowan, before the established deadline as indicated on the child's acceptance letter, as to whether or not they accept the assigned school. Refusal of a school does not necessarily mean you will be immediately assigned a new school. Your child may be placed on a waiting list, pending an opening at your chosen school. Unfortunately, we may not have enough funding to place every child that is eligible for the program.

5. How is the site my child may be placed at determined?

At the time of application, families are asked to choose from a list of potential sites where the NC Pre-K program may be offered. We encourage each family to select their top 3 site options. This site list is not finalized until after we receive funding notification from the state of North Carolina. This means that some of the sites on our list may not become a site due to lack of funding resources or other eligibility criteria not being met. If you selected a site that did not receive funding, we will attempt to place your child at one of your other options or a site closest to your home. Ultimately, Smart Start Rowan reserves the right to make NC Pre-K child placement decisions. Families may opt to be placed on a waiting list if their child was placed at a site they do not prefer.

6. Why does my child's assigned NC Pre-K program want to do a home visit?

SSR requires that each NC Pre-K site offer home visits to each family. Home visits are valuable in building a solid relationship with your child's teacher as well as allowing the teacher to spend individual time getting to know you and your child. We encourage you to allow your child's teacher to visit your family. You can prepare by making a list of questions you have for your child's teacher, as well as write down important things that you want your child's teacher to know about your child. During the Covid-19 pandemic, sites may offer alternate ways to meet with your family such as through zoom calls.

7. Are there any costs associated with NC Pre-K?

The only fees that may be charged to families are to cover the partial/full costs of meals when families do not qualify for free or reduced meals. When you register your child at the assigned school, you may need to fill out an application for free/reduced lunch. Families may also be charged the cost of wraparound services provided before or after the regular school day, during holidays or during summer months, if needed and available. Some individual sites may provide transportation in which case fees may apply. **It is also at the sites discretion to charge late fees for families that repeatedly arrive late to pick up their child.**

8. Does my child need a physical?

Yes, a completed Children’s Medical Form, Dental Assessment and Shot Record will be needed. **Make sure the physician has answered every question on the physical (i.e. Vision and hearing are both required) and the forms must be signed and dated- a physician’s stamp is not sufficient).** It is recommended that you have these forms completed prior to the first day of school. It is a program requirement that each of these forms be completed in entirety within the first 30 days of school start-up. **Unfortunately, if these documents are not on file, the child may be removed from the program.**

9. Does NC Pre-K provide transportation?

Parents/Guardians must transport their child each morning and pick them up in the afternoon. However, some sites may provide transportation for a fee. Sites make their own guidelines about who can receive transportation based on location and availability. Transportation must be arranged at the site, and not through Smart Start Rowan’s NC Pre-K office. We strongly encourage you to discuss transportation needs with your child’s assigned site immediately after accepting site placement.

10. Where are the classrooms for NC Pre-K?

NC Pre-K allows communities to decide where classrooms should be housed, based upon need and the availability of appropriate NC Pre-K sites, whether in a Child Care setting, Public School or Head Start. The amount of State funding will determine how many sites and classrooms will be available each year.

11. What are the days and times that the NC Pre-K classrooms operate?

NC Pre-K sites must provide a pre-kindergarten program for a regular school day for 10-months (180 instructional days) per school calendar year. In Rowan County, we generally follow the Rowan Salisbury School System Calendar and operate on a 6.75 hour school day. If your child is assigned to one of the private child care facilities or a head start location, they may provide an operational calendar that could be slightly different than the Rowan Salisbury or Kannapolis City School System Calendar. Depending on your child’s school, there may be days set aside for home visits and staggered entry. These days are included in the 180 day school calendar. It is important for your child’s success that they attend on a regular basis. **Children that do not attend regularly will be dropped from the program, unless there is an extenuating circumstance such as a medical emergency.**

12. What is a developmental screening?

All children entering a NC Pre-K program will be screened with an approved screening tool within 90 days of the first day of attendance in the program, or within 6 months prior to the first day of attendance into the program. This screening provides information on the child’s development and the possible need for further evaluation. Early detection is essential to increase the likelihood that children at risk of developmental delay, and those with disabilities, receive services quickly.

13. What will my child learn?

NC Pre-K programs are expected to provide developmentally appropriate, high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences for children. All Rowan County NC Pre-K Classrooms use The Creative Curriculum for Preschool to provide opportunities for children’s learning. The philosophy behind the curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn’t just repeating

what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in. In their early years, children explore the world around them by using all their senses (touching, tasting, listening, smelling, and looking). As children learn through purposeful and high quality play experiences, they are building critical foundational skills for cognitive development and academic achievement. These include verbalization, language comprehension, increased vocabulary, imagination, questioning, problem solving, observation, empathy, cooperation skills, and learning another's perspective. Through play, children learn social skills, creativity, hand-to-eye coordination, problem solving, and imagination. These skills are better learned through play rather than through flashcards, or academic drills. Play enables us to achieve the key goals of our early childhood curriculum. Play is the work of young children. Please consult with your child's teacher if you have any questions concerning your child or the curriculum.

14. What will my child's day consist of?

All schools have a classroom schedule posted. The day will consist of educational activities that provide high quality indoor and outdoor learning environments. Both indoor and outdoor environments shall address curricular objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, **active learning experiences**. Teachers are to arrange for children to be outdoors each and every day, for a minimum of one hour, weather permitting. Please ensure your child is dressed appropriately for play, both indoor and outdoor.

15. What will my child eat?

Sites must provide breakfast and/or snacks and lunch meeting USDA requirements during the regular school day. When children bring their own food for meals and snacks when allowed, if the food does not meet the specified nutritional requirements, the school must provide additional food necessary to meet those requirements.

16. Is it required that my child to be toilet trained, before enrolling in the NC Pre-K program?

Toilet training is a skill set that every child must experience and master. There is no specific age or stage in your child's life this skill must be mastered, however most children begin this process around the age of 2 years. For those children who have not yet mastered toilet training, SSR would encourage you to begin this process prior to the beginning of the school year. Please find helpful information about this process on SSR's website.

17. Can I visit my child's classroom?

Yes! Family involvement is critical to the success of your child. NC Pre-K programs must provide meaningful opportunities for parents and families to build trusting relationships that foster a bond between those involved in the education of the NC Pre-K child. Teachers provide many ways for families to be engaged in their child's education: home visits; parent/teacher conferences; classroom visits and options for parents/guardians to participate in classroom activities; and opportunities to engage families outside of the regular school day.

18. Family Expectations

Please refer to the "Family Responsibilities" form included in the child's application. The items identified there are crucial to ensure your child has a successful NC Pre-K experience. You are encouraged to contact your child's teacher or program administrator at any time if you have questions or concerns. We also ask that you complete a survey, provided via email by SSR, to let us know ways the program can be improved. At any time, you may contact Laura Villegas, SSR, Director of Programs if you have concerns that have not been addressed by your child's NC Pre-

K program. She can be contacted via email at villegas@smartstartrowan.org or by calling 704-603-3368.

19. Will my child be required to wear a uniform and what supplies will my child need for school?

Please consult your child's assigned school regarding their uniform policy. Any needed supplies will be provided by the school.

**If you have additional questions please don't hesitate to call
Smart Start Rowan at 704-630-9085.**