



## What is NC Pre-K?

NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) is a program of the Division of Child Development and Early Education in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. The requirements are designed to ensure 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, children need to be prepared in five development domains. 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 Play and Learning
- Emotional and Social Development
- Health and Physical Development
- Language Development and Communication
- Cognitive Development

## Frequently Asked Questions

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

NC Pre-K is a statewide pre-school program that provides an educational experience for at-risk four-year-olds who meet the age requirement of being four years old on or before August 31, 2026, 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 and is from a family whose gross income level is below 75% of the State Median Income level is eligible for the NC Pre-K program. If the family is over the income threshold, the child may qualify if one or more of the criteria identified here is applicable: (Additional documentation may be required for children of families that are over the income guidelines and the child may only be placed **AFTER** all income eligible children are placed).

- the child/family is receiving public assistance
- the child is experiencing homelessness
- The child has an identified disability indicated by a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- The child has Limited English Proficiency
- The child has a developmental or educational need and receives private services
- The child has a chronic health condition and the doctor writes a letter stating how NC Pre-K will help the child

- 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.

### **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, including personal information, in order to process the child's application. It is very important that you follow the application instructions and provide the exact information that is listed on the application checklist. Without the information, 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 reviewed for eligibility, based on birth date and the criteria mentioned above in question 2. Child placement is determined by the application priority score and date received. **Due to the number of applications received not every child can be placed at their desired location.** When funding has been awarded by the State of North Carolina, placement notifications will be sent to the family via email. The family must respond to the notification within 1 week. Refusal of a school does not mean your child will be 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. We strongly encourage you to apply early, to increase your chances of placement.

### **5. How is site placement determined for my child?**

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. Families should 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 or other eligibility criteria not 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, SSR 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 sites 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. To prepare make a list of questions you have, as well as write down important things that you want your child's teacher to know about your child. Sites may offer alternate ways to meet with your family such as virtually, at your request.

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

The only fees that may be charged 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. Where available, families may also be charged the cost of wraparound services to provide care before or after the regular school day, during holidays or during summer months. Some 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 Immunization documentation will be required. **The physician must answer every question on the physical (i.e. Vision and hearing are both required) and the forms must be signed and dated).** It is recommended that you have these forms completed prior to the first day of school. It is a program requirement that these forms be completed in entirety within the first 30 days of school start-up. The parent/guardian must provide a copy of these directly to the site. **Unfortunately, if these documents are not on file, the site reserves the right to drop your child from the program.**

**9. Does NC Pre-K provide transportation?**

No, 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 SSR's NC Pre-K program. We strongly encourage you to discuss transportation needs with your child's assigned site.

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

The local NC Pre-K committee decides where classrooms should be located, based upon need and site availability. Sites must meet high program standards and can be located in a Child Care setting, Public School or Head Start. The amount of State funding will determine how many sites and classrooms available each year.

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

NC Pre-K sites must provide the program for 10-months (180 days) per school calendar year. In Rowan County, we generally follow the Rowan Salisbury School System Calendar and operate on a 6.5-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 is 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 or family 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. To this end, we may also provide early screening events prior to the start of the school year. Developmental screening and IEP information may be shared with NC Pre-K sites and the school system.

**13. What will my child learn?**

All NC Pre-K programs, rather in a private facility, head start location or public school setting are expected to provide developmentally appropriate, high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences for children. All Rowan County 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. As children learn through purposeful and high-quality play experiences, they are building critical foundational skills for cognitive development and academic achievement. These include language comprehension, increased vocabulary, imagination, problem solving, observation, empathy, cooperation and social skills, creativity, and hand-to-eye coordination. These skills are best learned through play rather than through flashcards, or academic drills. Play enables early educators to achieve the key curriculum goals. 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 play-based activities. High quality indoor and outdoor learning environments shall address curriculum objectives by encouraging child-initiated, teacher-supported, **active learning experiences**. Teachers must allow children to be outdoors every day, for a minimum of 45 minutes of outdoor time, 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/snacks when allowed, the food must meet the specified nutritional requirements, or 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 encourages you to begin this process prior to the beginning of the school year.

**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; Ready Rosie App; classroom visits and options for parents/guardians to participate in classroom activities; and opportunities to engage families outside of the regular school day.

**18. What are the Family Expectations?**

Please refer to the "Family Responsibilities" form included in the child's application. The items identified here 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 Amanda May, SSR, NC Pre-K Manager if you have concerns that have not been addressed by your child's NC Pre-K program. She can be contacted via email at [amay@smartstartrowan.org](mailto:amay@smartstartrowan.org) or by calling 704-603-3353.

**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.

**20. My child receives EC Services, do I Need to Send him/her to a specific school?**

If you choose to place your child in an NC Pre-K site outside of your assigned school district and your child requires EC (Exceptional Children) services, those services cannot be provided within the NC Pre-K classroom. You will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements, including transportation, to ensure your child receives the required services.

**If you have additional questions please don't hesitate to contact  
Smart Start Rowan at [ssrncpk@gmail.com](mailto:ssrncpk@gmail.com) or 704-630-9085.**