



2022-2023 Additional Guidance for NC Pre-K Programs

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NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Child Development
and Early Education



2022-2023 Additional Guidance for NC Pre-K Programs

NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies must provide this guidance to all NC Pre-K sites and NC Pre-K teaching staff. Sites should contact their Contracting Agency and Contracting Agencies should contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant with questions about this guidance. For specific questions about contracts, please contact your DCDEE Contract Administrator.

1. Purpose

The **2022-2023 Additional Guidance for NC Pre-K Programs** serves as a replacement to the *Interim COVID-19 Policies for NC Pre-K Programs* and is meant to address program expectations specific to **NC Pre-K programs and classrooms** for the 2022-2023 program year. **This guidance applies to all NC Pre-K classrooms, regardless of the setting in which they operate (public school, private child care center, Head Start program.)** This guidance may be amended by the NC Pre-K state office as needed.

2. Health and Safety Guidance

All preschool programs in public schools and private sites are required to follow the health and safety guidance outlined in the [ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit](#), in accordance with the [Memorandum on Preschool Programs and K-12 Public Health Guidance](#).

3. Program Year

The 2022-2023 NC Pre-K program year will operate for a full 36 weeks as usual, 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, beginning no later than September 6th. NC Pre-K programs are encouraged to use the weeks before NC Pre-K instruction officially begins to conduct child/family orientation, conduct home visits, engage in professional development training, etc.

4. Site Level Staff Flexibilities

A. Long-term Substitute Teachers

While the expectation from DCDEE is that all sites will work to secure qualified lead teachers and teacher assistants, we recognize the impact that COVID-19 has had on the ability for programs to hire and/or maintain qualified staff. Therefore, for the 2022-2023 program year, DCDEE will continue to offer flexibility to programs by **waiving the 12-week limitation** for long-term substitutes serving in NC Pre-K classrooms.

In addition, for the 2022-2023 program year, NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies will **not** be required to assign a lower per-child rate for classrooms who must hire long-term substitute lead teachers. NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies may reimburse classrooms at a higher “approved lead teacher” rate as long as funds are available within their Direct Service allocations. NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies should contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for assistance with entering rates in NC Pre-K Plan, if needed.

B. Interim Site Administrators **New Flexibility for 2022-2023**

While the expectation from DCDEE is that all sites will work to secure qualified Site Administrators, we recognize the impact that COVID-19 has had on the ability for programs to hire and/or maintain qualified staff. Therefore, for the 2022-2023 program year, DCDEE will offer flexibility to programs by **waiving the 12-week limitation** for Interim Site Administrators serving at NC Pre-K sites.

5. Mode of Instruction

Our goal for 2022-2023 continues to be to provide as much stability and in-person instruction as possible to children and families. Therefore, it is expected that **ALL** NC Pre-K students will be provided **fully in-person instruction** for the 2022-2023 NC Pre-K program year.

- **NOTE: Remote learning may only be provided to children for limited periods of time and only as an option of last resort.** See Section 6. *Circumstances When Remote Learning May Be Needed* for more information.

6. Circumstances When Remote Learning May Be Needed

NC Pre-K programs will **NOT** be allowed to operate **fully remote or hybrid classrooms** for the 2022-2023 program year. However, remote learning may be provided to children for a **limited time** in response to any of the following circumstances:

- During the weeks prior to instruction starting on September 6th (e.g., home visits and orientation may be done remotely)
- If a COVID-19 cluster (5 or more cases) occurs at an NC Pre-K site and the Local Health Department recommends that the site and/or classroom(s) should close temporarily for cleaning
- If a child is not able to attend for an extended amount of days due to the child and/or household member(s) being sick and/or quarantined due to COVID-19
- If NCDHHS issues a directive requiring closure or reduced capacity to minimize the spread of COVID-19
- In response to inclement weather or to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding
- Other conditions impacting a child's ability to attend in-person such as illness, hospitalization, military leave, a family emergency, or crisis requiring family travel
- Other conditions that require the NC Pre-K site to close due to damages such as a fire

7. Remote Learning Requirements

NOTE: Remote learning may only be provided to children if one or more of the circumstances outlined in Section 6 have been met.

A. Method and Duration of Delivery:

A traditional in-person NC Pre-K day is 6.5 hours of time in the classroom, including direct instruction, nap time, snacks, transitions, child-initiated play, and outdoor play. A child/family engaged in remote learning instead of in-person instruction should also be provided with an equivalent 6.5 hours, which includes direct instruction via remote learning (such as Remote Moments, Section 7B), nap time, snacks, transitions, child-initiated play, outdoor play, family-led engagement activities, and 1:1 family check-ins (see Section 7C).

However, it would not be considered developmentally appropriate for a young child to receive 6.5 hours of direct remote instruction via a video meeting, for example, each day. Instead, NC Pre-K teachers should provide short direct instruction and provide activities and learning opportunities for children and families to engage in independently that total approximately 6.5 hours of available material daily for a remote learner/family.

B. Remote Instruction: ‘Remote Moments’

Remote Moments are blocks of live, direct, remote instruction delivered daily by lead teachers or teacher assistants. Teachers are **required** to:

- Plan for and deliver five (5) discrete Remote Moments with different activities throughout the week utilizing Teaching Strategies Distance Learning Solution resources.
 - Remote Moment content must align with the 5 developmental domains from the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development.
- Offer Remote Moments **at least once per day** if remote learning is being provided individually to **specific children** who are unable to attend in-person (ex. If a child must quarantine at home due to a COVID-19 exposure)
- Offer Remote Moments **at least twice per day** if remote learning is being provided to **ALL children** (ex. If the whole classroom must close in response to a COVID-19 outbreak)
 - Teachers must offer at least two (2) sessions with the same content at different times of day (e.g., offered once in the morning and once in the afternoon) to increase families’ ability to attend the session.
- Offer Remote Moment materials to families based on family needs, such as reliable access to technology or primary home language.

C. Family Engagement: ‘Check-ins’

Family/Child Check-ins are opportunities for the lead teacher (with teacher assistant as an optional participant) and a child/family to connect live through two-way communication (the teacher communicates with the child/family, and the child/family communicates back) every week while the child/family is participating in remote learning. A Check-in could take place through a call, video conference, or through a socially-distanced in-person visit while everyone wears face coverings. A Check-in may be a brief conversation, or it could be a longer period of time depending on child/family need. Building a strong relationship through frequent, quality interactions with families is always important – but even more important when providing remote learning. Families also need to be kept informed changes in schedule or protocols.

Lead Teachers are **required** to:

- Prepare for and document every Check-in in writing
 - A child/family’s participation in the check-in should be documented and used as a means to track attendance.
- Offer Family Check-ins **at least once per week** if remote learning is being provided individually to **specific children** who are unable to attend in-person (ex. If a child must quarantine at home due to a COVID-19 exposure)
- Offer Family Check-ins **at least twice per week** if remote learning is being provided to **ALL children** (ex. If the whole classroom must close in response to a COVID-19 outbreak)
- Make every reasonable effort to communicate with the family in an accessible manner, such as:
 - Adjust the timing of family check-ins to meet family’s needs
 - Attempt to contact a family member through multiple formats (text message, phone call, in-person socially-distanced visit with all people wearing face coverings) if other avenues are unsuccessful
 - For non-English dominant families, provide communication through an interpreter (e.g. staff, family member, etc.)

D. Additional Recommendations for Teachers

- Provide Remote Moments through a virtual platform, such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, and/or using Teaching Strategies digital resources.
- Plan Remote Moments that last for no more than 30 minutes at a time.
- Plan for Remote Moments that allow for two-way communication where teachers, children, and families can speak directly to one another.
- Plan Remote Moments separately from in-person instructional time and designed specifically for remote learners.
- Alternatively, plan Remote Moments that include together in-person and remote learners through a video platform set up during regularly scheduled in-person learning time (e.g., during a shared writing activity, video conferencing would allow remote learners to contribute to the conversation in real time.)
- Lead teachers or teacher assistants can plan and implement Remote Moments, depending on scheduling needs and maximizing time during the typical in-person learning day.
- Consider virtual field trips as a Remote Moment.
- Refer to the [NC DPI Online Pedagogy Considerations for Digital Instruction page](#) for guidance on protecting student safety and privacy while using audio and video conferencing services.
- Provide applicable technical resources and support to families to participate in Family Check-ins (e.g. downloading the Teaching Strategies family application)
- Utilize weekly Family Check-in time to:
 - Provide updates on procedures related to the school or site's response to COVID-19
 - Share ongoing information on the child's developmental progress using evidence-based observations
 - Provide individualized recommendations for activities and engagement opportunities for the family to best be able to support their child
- Encourage families to bring questions, concerns, ideas, and evidence of learning at home (e.g., pictures of activities) to the Family Check-in
- Encourage the child to be an active participant in the Family Check-in

8. Payment Policy

A. Payments **Revised for 2022-2023**

For the 2022-2023 program year, DCDEE will provide payments based on the **traditional “per-child”, attendance-based model** as summarized below and detailed in the [NC Pre-K Program Requirements and Guidance](#). (See *Section 4: The NC Pre-K Site – Subsection C. Program Attendance Policy*)

- **100% reimbursement** will be provided when a child attends
 - **10 days or 50% of the operating days** during the month, **or**
 - **at least one day** during the first and last month of classroom operation, **or**
 - **at least one day** during the child's first month of enrollment

- **50% reimbursement** will be provided when a child attends **between 25% - 50% of the operating days** during the month
- **0% reimbursement** will be provided when a child attends **less than 25% of the operating days** during the month
- **0% reimbursement** will be provided when a **slot is unfilled**

B. **COVID-19 Attendance Exceptions** ****Revised for 2022-2023****

Per-child reimbursement rates will **not** be reduced if:

- A NC Pre-K classroom/site is required to close due to COVID-19 exposure or positive cases, **or**
- A child is unable to attend for an extended amount of days due to the child being sick and/or quarantined due to COVID-19

NOTE: NC Pre-K teachers are **required** to provide remote learning services to children until in-person instruction can resume.

NC Pre-K programs must communicate with their NC Pre-K Contracting Agency to request a COVID-19 attendance exception. Contracting Agencies will be responsible for verifying remote learning services are provided in accordance with the guidance above in Section 7 and documenting attendance exceptions in the NC Pre-K KIDS database system.

*****If remote learning services are not provided or cannot be verified, then the attendance exception should NOT be applied. Payment would be made based on the child's actual in-person attendance days.***

9. **Legislative Rate Increases for Private Sites**

For the 2022-2023 program year, the Division of Child Development and Early Education will be implementing this legislative rate increase in accordance with the guidance below. **NC Pre-K sites are required to use the funds provided to increase the salaries of their NC Pre-K teachers as is intended by the General Assembly. Contracting agencies must develop a process for monitoring programs to ensure funds are used as intended.**

A. **Classroom Eligibility Requirements**

In order to be eligible to receive the rate increase, the NC Pre-K classroom **must be located in a private child care center, have 1 or more NC Pre-K children enrolled, and have a qualified lead teacher or long-term substitute in place** in the NC Pre-K Plan database.

- Private site classrooms that have been allocated slots and have qualified staff in place **will receive the full rate increase as long as at least one child qualifies for reimbursement.**
- Classrooms located in public schools and head start sites **are not eligible** to receive the rate increase regardless of enrolled children or teacher qualification.

B. **Funding Amounts**

NC Pre-K classrooms that meet the eligibility criteria described above in Section A will receive a supplemental payment in the amount of \$4,895 which will be distributed in **10 equal payments of \$489.50** throughout the year. This amount equates to an **additional 2%** increase on top of the 2.145% increase received for the 2021-2022 program year.

Program Year	"Standard" Classroom Rate	Legislative Rate Increase	Total
2021-2022	\$117,000 <i>(18 children x \$650 per child x 10 months)</i>	\$2,510 <i>(\$117,000 x ~2.145%)</i>	\$119,510
2022-2023	\$119,510	\$2,385 <i>(\$119,510 x ~2%)</i>	\$121,895
Total Legislative Rate Increase		\$4,895	

C. Contract Amendment

- Additional funding for legislative rate increases will be added to each NC Pre-K contracting agency's Direct Services funding in a separate budget line item through NC Pre-K Contract effective July 1, 2022.
- **Contractors will not need to send in a Line Item Budget** as this funding will be placed in the Subcontracting and Grants budget category in a separate line item in the contract amendment.
- The funding breakdown will be included in the budget narrative as outlined below:

Example: Funds budgeted for legislative rate increases for 10 classrooms for a total funding amount of \$48,950 (10 classrooms x \$4,895= \$48,950).

D. Payment Distribution

Contracting agencies will request the legislative rate increases as part of the monthly NC Pre-K reimbursement process and will be responsible for distributing funding to NC Pre-K providers. The FSR will include the additional funds for private child care center rate increases on a separate line item under Subcontracting and Grants as budgeted in the contract.

The NC Pre-K Plan and NC Pre-K KIDS database systems will be modified to capture appropriate funding amounts for all eligible classrooms. NC Pre-K programs and contracting agencies will submit monthly attendance and reimbursement requests following **all usual processes**. NC Pre-K contracting agencies will be responsible for reviewing the monthly Summary of Attendance forms and ensuring that all classroom payments are accurately reflected. Any questions about discrepancies in your payment amount should be directed to your NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant.

10. Child Care Rule .3013 - NC Pre-K Teacher Assistant Education and Credentials

New Rule Change – effective April 1, 2022

****NOTE: There are no provisions in this Rule change that allow for the "grandfathering" of new or existing staff.**

All teacher assistants shall have a high school diploma or its equivalent and shall either:

- **hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential; or**
- hold or be working toward an Associate Degree or higher in birth-through-kindergarten, child development, early childhood education, or an early childhood education related field. Teacher assistants working toward the Associate Degree shall make progress by completing a minimum of six documented semester hours per year.

NEW: All teacher assistants shall complete at least **15 hours of annual in-service professional development**. A combination of college coursework, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or clock hours may be used to complete the requirements of this Rule.

The site-level administrator shall document the progress of any teacher assistants who are working toward the required education. This documentation must be maintained in the individual's staff record available for review by the Division.

Summary

- Limited Impact on Current Teacher Assistants
 - Over **70% of the teacher assistants** already hold an AAS Degree
- Continues to support education of early childhood workforce and professionalizing the field
- All teacher assistants must complete continuing education clock hours each year. NC Pre-K teachers are provided many opportunities for professional development.
- **DPI aligned and supported** the updated language of the Child Care Rule .3013
- Positions NC Pre-K program to **meet all 10 of NIEER Quality Indicators** for NC Pre-K Programs

11. Session Law 2021-117 – Regulatory Reform

Section 2: NC Pre-K School Options *(effective January 1, 2022)*

- DCDEE will be required to post the following information on its website:
 - The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by local school administrative units.
 - The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by charter schools.
 - Scholarships for enrollment in nonpublic schools provided pursuant to Part 2A of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, or any successor program.

This information shall be indexed or searchable by county, and the Division shall update the information on June 1 each year.

- NC Pre-K programs will be required to provide all families with the address of the website where the information can be found and a brief description of the information available.
- Upon request, NC Pre-K programs must furnish to a family a list of the following educational opportunities located in the same county as the NC Pre-K facility, or, if specified, any other county:
 - The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by local school administrative units.
 - The educational opportunities for kindergarten offered by charter schools.
 - Scholarships for enrollment in nonpublic schools provided pursuant to Part 2A of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, or any successor program.

DCDEE is in the process of getting this information finalized and will ensure that all relevant links are shared with all NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies once available.

12. Teaching Strategies Resources

DCDEE is continuing to provide access to the Teaching Strategies distance learning resources for all teachers and staff who support classrooms with at least one NC Pre-K child.

The Teaching Strategies Distance Learning Solution provides resources to teachers and families including:

- 24/7 access to digital curriculum allowing for consistency across in-person and remote learning
- Remote access to professional development best practices for in-person and remote learning
- Developmentally appropriate assessment resources
- Developmentally appropriate family-facing resources, including videos and activity instructions
- Two-way communication between teachers and families through a mobile application

A. Remote Learning

NOTE: Remote learning may only be provided to children if one or more of the circumstances outlined in Section 6 have been met.

NC Pre-K teachers must use Teaching Strategies resources for remote instruction. Teachers are **required** to:

- Provide Teaching Strategies family engagement resources every day to children and their families
- Highlight opportunities for families to submit evidence of learning remotely through the Teaching Strategies platform or through other methods (e.g., sharing pictures of completed activities, sharing videos of the child engaging in the activity)

Teachers should regularly supplement Teaching Strategies curriculum and materials as needed to support their individual students' and family needs.

B. ReadyRosie Family Engagement

Access to ReadyRosie is also being provided for all NC Pre-K programs in order to support increased engagement and partnership with families. NC Pre-K programs are **required** to enroll all NC Pre-K families in the ReadyRosie solution and **must** incorporate ReadyRosie resources into their existing family engagement plans.

C. Professional Development and Training

Teaching Strategies will continue to provide professional development training sessions for NC Pre-K teachers, teacher assistants, site administrators, and contracting agency staff throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Additional information regarding Professional Development opportunities and requirements will be provided at a later date.

D. Child Assessments

NC Pre-K teachers must conduct ongoing formative assessments on NC Pre-K children to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, and how each child processes information and solves problems during the learning process. This information should be used to plan and deliver instruction.

NC Pre-K teachers may use any formative assessment tool that has been [approved](#) by the NC Child Care Commission. However, all NC Pre-K teachers are **required** to document child growth and developmental data **from the Spring/Final Checkpoint** in the *MyTeachingStrategies*® platform regardless of which formative assessment tool is selected.

E. Kindergarten Transition Reports

In accordance with the **Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021** ([Session Law 2021-8](#)), a formative assessment must be administered at the end of the Pre-K school year, and the results of the assessment must be shared with the receiving kindergarten teacher. NC DPI, NC Department of Health and Human Services, and Teaching Strategies have collaborated to create a Transition Report to address this legislative requirement and support the state's transition to kindergarten efforts.

All Pre-K teachers in public schools, as well as teachers in NC Pre-K programs located in private sites and Head Start sites, will complete a Transition Report within Teaching Strategies GOLD® for each child in their class no later than May 31st. Transition Reports will be transferred to receiving kindergarten teachers via NC ELI as the new school year begins, providing information about a child's knowledge, skills, and abilities related to Widely Held Expectations for child development.

You can find the report under the “Family” tab as seen in the screenshot below.



Resources & Support: Please take advantage of the following resources listed below for support in accessing and completing the Transition Report.

- **Transition Report Webinars:** Click to view [a recording of the webinar](#) held on April 20th. When you click on the [link](#), you will need to enter the password **9WhQqQyH** to view the recording.
- **Transition Report Instructional Video:** View the [Pre-Release: NC Pre-K Transition Report Overview](#) video that will show you how to complete the new reporting tool.
- **Office Hours:** [Click this link to sign up for an Office Hours session](#) led by Teaching Strategies on accessing and completing the report. You can also register for office hours or schedule a consultation with Teaching Strategies by sending an email to NC@teachingstrategies.com.

13. LETRS Training

Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 – Session Law 2021-8

In accordance with the **Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021** ([Session Law 2021-8](#)), the Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, **must**:

- Provide to educators and administrators working with children in the NC Pre-K program to ensure developmentally appropriate instruction grounded in the Science of Reading and outcomes promoting reading achievement in students.
- Utilize a third-party independent teacher training program to deliver professional development that demonstrates evidence-based success with educators and administrators in establishing deep knowledge of literacy instruction.

In order to meet the requirements of the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021, a contract has been implemented with **Lexia Voyager Sopris** to provide LETRS® (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) for Early Childhood training to NC Pre-K teachers, public school Pre-K teachers, and Site Administrators.

The LETRS® for Early Childhood training includes:

- Two training sessions that are each delivered in-person or broken down into virtual training sessions
- Four online units (approx. 14 hours)
- Related readings (approx. 4 hours)
- Time dedicated to applying learned skills in their classrooms as a “Bridge to Practice” (approx. 5 hours)

LETRS Participant Responsibilities
<u>Pre-K Training (Early Childhood)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete a minimum of 2 units per semester over 1 year<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-paced online unit content should be completed prior to virtual/in-person unit trainings• Attend all trainings• Complete all assignments, including Bridge to Practice activities• Pass each unit as prescribed by vendor with the Goal of 80% Mastery• Contact NC Pre-K Contract Administrator and/or District LETRS Point of Contact for any training questions and technical assistance
<u>Administrator Training</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend all Administrative Professional Learning Sessions• Complete self-paced online unit content as outlined in your district specific implementation plan• Complete all training assignments• Complete each unit as prescribed• Contact NC Pre-K Contract Administrator and/or District LETRS Point of Contact for any training questions and technical assistance

North Carolina LETRS Implementation 2021-2025

*****NOTE: LETRS training is required for all NC Pre-K Lead Teachers and Site Administrators. New staff will need to complete make up sessions in order to meet the training requirement. Contact your District LETRS Point of Contact for more information regarding make up sessions.***

Cohort 1: Summer 2021 – Spring 2023: Educators will begin in the summer of 2021 by completing the online portion of Unit 1, approximately an 8-hour time commitment. At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, educators will complete the Unit 1 Bridge to Practice activities in the classroom with students before moving forward to the next units.

Update:

- 100% will complete LETRS for Early Childhood Educators facilitated training by the end of June 2022.
- 100% will complete LETRS for Administrators facilitated training by the end of June 2022.
 - Cohort 1 site administrators will be offered the option to receive the LETRS for Early Childhood Educators manual and online course access.

Cohort 2: Winter 2021 – Winter 2023: Educators will begin LETRS training as they return from winter break (roughly) and complete one Unit of online, print, Bridge to Practices every 8-10 weeks. Each unit is approximately a 8-hr time commitment.

Update:

- Cohort 2 counties will complete LETRS for Early Childhood Educators facilitated training in the fall of 2022.
- 99% will complete LETRS for Administrators facilitated training by the end of June 2022.
 - Cohort 1 site administrators will be offered the option to receive the LETRS for Early Childhood Educators manual and online course access.

Cohort 3: Summer 2022 – Spring 2024: Educators will begin around July 1, 2022 and before the start of the school year be expected to complete the online portion of Unit 1, approximately an 8-hour time commitment. At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, teachers will complete the Unit 1 Bridge to Practice activities in the classroom with students before moving forward to the next units.

Update:

- 57 districts/counties will participate in Cohort 3. Training will begin in July 2022.
- Cohort 3 site administrators will participate in the LETRS for Early Childhood Educators training.