How do we make sure every child in Forsyth County has a chance to thrive in school, in work, and in life?

We’re doing it by working together like never before. By consciously stepping out of silos to embrace a common vision. By collectively spreading best practices that support children’s growth from cradle to career. By intentionally staying connected to our kids and to each other. We’re doing it by actively aligning our passions to embrace the possible.

THIS IS THE FORSYTH PROMISE.

The Forsyth Promise is a diverse partnership that brings all of our community’s efforts and ideas together to:

- shine the light on what’s working well for kids,
- focus on common goals and outcomes, and
- align our community’s resources and practices to ensure the best educational outcomes for Forsyth County’s children.

In a nutshell, The Forsyth Promise puts us all on the same page and unites us around the same vision.

OUR VISION:

Every child in Forsyth County receives the best education possible and is fully equipped to thrive throughout life.
What Would be Possible if . . .

We adopted shared, whole child, birth-through-age-eight measures that put children on a pathway to grade-level reading?

We aligned policies and practices that were rooted in how children develop?

We coordinated strategies to support children’s optimal development beginning at birth?
PATHWAYS to grade-level reading
End of third grade reading predicts academic achievement and career success.
It’s Urgent!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>67%</th>
<th>37%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of jobs in NC this year require some post-secondary education</td>
<td>of NC employers reported difficulty hiring in 2016</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>34%</th>
<th>36%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>of NC high school students met ACT college readiness benchmarks in reading in 2016</td>
<td>of NC 4th graders in 2019 scored at or above proficient in reading as measured by NAEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addressing these challenges and decreasing reading proficiency requires that we begin here.
Why Birth to Eight?

The **most rapid period of development** in human life happens from birth to eight.

Brain development during that time **lays the foundation for everything that comes after.**
Child development is a dynamic, interactive process. It is NOT predetermined.
Brains are **Built, Not Born**

Early experiences are **built into children’s bodies**—shaping brain architecture and impacting how biological systems develop.

Every **experience a baby has forms a neural connection** in the brain at a rate of more than a million synapses per second in the early years.

**Not all will last.** Connections that get used more strengthen, and those used less fade.

Positive early experiences build **a strong foundation** for learning and future health.
“The foundation for school, career and life success is largely determined through the development of cognitive and character skills beginning in children’s earliest years.”

Nobel Laureate
Professor James J. Heckman
Good News: It’s Achievable

Each child can have the opportunity to be on track by third grade with aligned state and local policies and practices rooted in child development, including:

- Health and Development on Track, Starting at Birth
- Supported and Supportive Families and Communities
- High Quality Birth-through-Age-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance
NC Voters
Get It

80% of voters say early education should be a higher priority than reducing business taxes in the state.

Invest in early childhood education and build a stronger North Carolina.
Learn more: buildthefoundation.org/2018-voter-poll-toolkit
Voters from all parties side with investing in early childhood education over reducing business taxes.
The percentage of voters saying we should do more for young children’s education has increased by 15 points since 2014.
All NC children, regardless of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade – and all children with disabilities achieve expressive and receptive communication skills commensurate with their developmental ages – so that they have the greatest opportunity for life success.
NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative is driven by the foundational belief that together we can realize greater outcomes for young children than any of us can produce on our own.
Hundreds of Pathways Partners, Including:

State agencies:
• DPI—Office of Early Learning, Head Start State Collaboration Office, K-3 Literacy
• DHHS—Early Intervention, Public Health, Social Services, Medicaid, Child Development and Early Education

Nonprofits and Advocates—NC Child, John Locke Foundation, NC Justice Center, Institute of Medicine, BEST NC, Partnership for Children/Smart Start

Professional Associations—NC Pediatric Society, Association for the Education of Young Children, School Boards Association

Local organizations—Smart Start partnerships, local United Ways

AND many, many more...
Pathways uses an Equity Lens.
Primary Lens: Racial Equity

• Ensure racial diversity in the room.
• Disaggregate data by race and ethnicity (and other factors).
• Prioritize focusing on measures where there are large racial disparities.
• Intentionally include research on policies and practices that have been shown to move the needle specifically for children of color.
• Provide racial equity training for decision-makers and continued, ongoing equity-based facilitation throughout the process.
• Build processes so that the “slippery fish of race” stays on the table.
• Prioritize strategies and solutions that improve racial equity.
• Speak clearly and directly about focusing on racial equity.
Equity Survey

• Deeper consideration of issues surfaced and slowed the pace of work, resulting in more thorough analysis.

• The question, “What does this have to do with race?” became leading prompt to frame discussions.

• The racial equity lens became primary assessment tool for prioritizing.

• Majority of Design Team members found great value in the explicit not exclusive focus on racial equity.
Equity Survey: How Will You Use the Lens?

- Integrate the racial equity lens into strategic planning efforts of our own agencies.
- Interrogate the tools and materials we use in our work.
- Use the analysis to improve parent-teacher relationships.
- Use as a lens through which to assess partnership and organizational culture.
- Be intentional about how structural racism impacts outcomes.
- Use the racial equity framework with our own families.
- Use as a tool to keep ourselves accountable in our work.
Three Phases of Pathways

PHASE 1: Data Action Team—What do we need to measure to know children are on a Pathway to Grade-Level Reading?

PHASE 2: Learning Teams—How is NC doing on those measures? Where should we focus as a state?

PHASE 3: Design Team—What should we do about it? What expectations should we hold for child and family systems and what actions should NC take to improve outcomes for children birth-through-age-eight and their families?
PHASE 1: How do we know children are on a pathway to grade-level reading?
High Quality B-8
Care and Education

School stability
Diverse schools
Special education
High quality Pre-K
Cultural competence
Supported transitions
Suspension/expulsion
Native language support
Specialized teacher training
Trauma-informed education
Affordable, high quality child care
Quality summer learning programs
Teacher/administrator education and knowledge of child development
Supported and Supportive Families and Communities

- Maternal education
- Paid leave
- Parental mental health
- Parental ACEs
- Parent education supports
- Substance use
- Treatment access
- Poverty screening
- Family meals
- Books in home
Health and Development on Track

Health insurance
Well-child visits and medical home
Access to doctors and dentists
Food security
Breastfeeding
Healthy weight
Physical activity
Healthy eating
Dental care
Immunizations
Developmental and social-emotional screenings, referrals and services
Prenatal care
Smoking and substance abuse
Teen pregnancy
PHASE 2:
How are we **doing?**
Where should we **begin?**

Social-Emotional Health

High Quality Birth-through-Age-Eight Early Care and Education

Regular School Attendance
The Forsyth Promise
educate | equip | engage | cradle to career

Announcement of Priorities

1. Improve access and education around mental health.
2. Improve the quality and affordability of 0-3 childcare and Pre-K; provide more competitive compensation for teachers.
3. Increase prevalence of specific supports to break the cycle of poverty.
Pathways Design Teams:

- Worked for a full year to understand NC’s assets and opportunities for action and gathered broad input
- Determined what expectations we should hold of child and family systems
- Proposed actions NC should take to realize those expectations
OUR EXPECTATIONS

Pathways holds the following Expectations for North Carolina's child and family systems to support each child's healthy growth and development:

**EXPECTATION 1**
SYSTEMS ARE FAMILY-DRIVEN AND EQUITABLE

North Carolina's systems for children birth-through-age-eight and their families are built on two core strengths: engaging with and learning from families, and focusing on racial equity and cultural competence. These strengths enable systems to adapt to the needs of children and their families—ensuring that those facing the most barriers to success have access to the most supports, and providing a strong foundation for children's development and learning.

**EXPECTATION 3**
EDUCATION SYSTEM IS ACCESSIBLE AND HIGH-QUALITY

North Carolina's birth-through-age-eight education system is available to all, user-friendly, culturally-competent, employs a racially diverse, high-quality workforce, and supports all aspects of children's development, including literacy and language development, cognition, approaches to learning, physical well-being, and social-emotional development.

**EXPECTATION 2**
SYSTEMS SERVE CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

North Carolina's early childhood systems work from the knowledge that children live in families and communities that shape their development and learning. The well-being of children is closely linked to the well-being of their families and communities.

**EXPECTATION 4**
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM IS ACCESSIBLE AND HIGH-QUALITY

North Carolina's infant and early childhood health system provides children with access to high-quality, racially diverse pediatric, primary care and mental health clinicians and linked services that support children's social-emotional health and development.
PATHWAYS' PROPOSED ACTIONS

If implemented effectively, the following actions will begin to realize the expectations that Pathways Partners hold of North Carolina’s birth-through-age-eight child and family systems. These actions are not the whole universe of what could be done. They are a start.
Recommended **Actions:**

Address racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and ability inequities

Are data- and research-driven and informed by developmental science

Address the whole child and family

Are actionable and accountable

Address critical gaps in our system
Expectation 1: Systems are Family-Driven and Equitable

North Carolina’s systems for children birth-through-age-eight and their families are built on two core strengths: engaging with and learning from families, and focusing on racial equity and cultural competence. These strengths enable systems to adapt to the needs of children and their families – ensuring that those facing the most barriers to success have access to the most supports, and providing a strong foundation for children’s development and learning.
Child and family systems deeply engage with and learn from families.

- Support Families in Advocating for their Children.
- Require Linked Strategies Across Programs to Engage with and Learn from Families.
  - Work with Community Groups to Reach Families Where They Are.
  - Involve Families in Services from the Beginning.
Child and family systems prioritize racial equity and cultural competence.

- Be Inclusive in Planning and Designing Services.
- **Set Equity Goals.**
- Ensure Assessment Instruments are Culturally and Linguistically Relevant.
North Carolina’s early childhood systems work from the knowledge that children live in families and communities that shape their development and learning. The well-being of children is closely linked to the well-being of their families and communities.
Child and family systems address the social drivers of health that impact children’s development by screening, providing needed treatment and services, and promoting family and community strengths and resilience.

- Screen Children and Families for Social Determinants of Health and Connect them to Appropriate Services.
- Invest in Two-Generation Interventions.
- Expand Maternal Depression Screening and Treatment.
North Carolina businesses and communities advance policies and supports that reduce stress on families.

- Create Family-Friendly Employment Policies.
- Increase Access to Affordable Housing.
- Ensure Accessible Transportation to Early Care Programs, Schools and Health Services.
Expectation 3: Education System is Accessible and High-Quality

North Carolina’s birth-through-age-eight education system is available to all, user-friendly, culturally-competent, employs a racially diverse, high-quality workforce, and supports all aspects of children’s development, including literacy and language development, cognition, approaches to learning, physical well being, and social-emotional development.
North Carolina’s youngest children have access (including availability, convenience and affordability) to early care and education programs and supports prior to kindergarten entry, including child care, Early Head Start, Head Start, Title I, and NC Pre-K.

- Increase Access to Infant and Toddler Care.
- Provide Wrap-Around Services for High Quality Early Care and Education.
- Expand Child Care Subsidies for Children.
- Raise Child Care Subsidy Rates.
- Provide Higher Subsidy Rates to Providers in Underserved Communities.
North Carolina’s children have the opportunity to learn in environments that are culturally relevant and free from systemic racism and cultural and racial implicit bias.

- Recruit and Retain Educators and School Leaders of Color.
- Adopt Research-Based Standards for Culturally-Relevant Teaching.
- Provide Professional Development for Teachers on Cultural Competency and Working with Families.
- Ensure Curricula and Materials are Culturally Relevant.
- Ensure Education Accountability Systems are Culturally Relevant.
- Adapt K-3 School Funding System to Increase Equity.
North Carolina’s children, especially those with the most roadblocks to opportunity, have well-trained, high-quality teachers and school leaders, from birth-through-third grade.

- Increase Standards and Compensation of Birth-through-Age-Five Educators.
- Support Incentives to Ensure High Quality Educators in High Need Schools and Early Education Programs.
- Adjust Hiring Practices to Ensure High-Quality Educators.
- **Create Collaborative Birth-through-Third Grade Professional Development.**
- Provide Research-Informed Professional Development.
North Carolina’s early learning environments support and promote children’s social-emotional development and executive functioning.

- Eliminate or Minimize Suspension and Expulsion.
- Prepare Teachers to Build Specific Student Skills Needed for Success.
- Require Specific Educator and Administrator Professional Development for Building Positive School Climates.
- Hire Sufficient Support Staff.
- Invest in School Health and Mental Health Staff and Clinics.
- Support Schools and Child Care Programs to Engage Deeply with Families.
North Carolina’s infant and early childhood (birth-through-age-eight) health system provides children with access to high-quality, racially diverse pediatric, primary care and mental health clinicians and linked services that support children’s social-emotional health and development.
North Carolina has a well-trained and adequate workforce of infant and early childhood mental health clinicians with a focus on increasing the number of providers of color.

- Recruit and Retain Infant and Toddler Mental Health Clinicians.
- **Build a Pipeline of Health Providers of Color.**
- Expand the NC Child Treatment Program.
- Create a Mental Health Professional Development System.
Professionals who interact with and serve young children in North Carolina’s child and family systems have a strong foundation in infant and early childhood mental health competencies.

- Infuse Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Competencies in Provider Education and Professional Development.
- Increase Professional Development in Mental Health Treatment for Pediatricians and Family Physicians
North Carolina’s children have access to high-quality mental health services that meet their needs.

- Use Data to Track Community Needs and Service Provision.
- Infuse Social-Emotional Health into Other Child-Serving Systems.
- Include At-Risk Children in Early Intervention.
- Address Barriers in Health Insurance Coverage of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Services to Ensure Adequate Benefits.
- Integrate Mental Health Providers with Pediatric and Other Primary Care Practices.
Pathways is North Carolina’s Early Learning Operating Model

The Pathways Model and Action Framework have been forged through the thinking of hundreds of stakeholders across sector, geography, and political aisle, community voices from two rounds of 14 community conversations, a meta-analysis of parent voice from across North Carolina, and national research focused on what works for children of color.
Pathways in **Action**

Pathways is serving as a **foundation of current early childhood state-level initiatives.**

- Leandro Commission for a Sound, Basic Education
- Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
- Early Childhood Action Plan
- B-3rd Interagency Council
- Essentials For Childhood
- myFutureNC
- Think Babies™ NC
Pathways: Local Action

Sharing data from the data book has helped to engage community members. Connections with community members, business leaders, and local elected officials have led to increased engagement in the conversations around early childhood education. Rockingham County Partnership for Children

Convening community stakeholders for both community conversations created visible excitement to work together beyond the community conversations with the start of an Early Childhood Committee. Onslow County Partnership for Children

We have linked school districts to the evidence-based "what works" documents for them to think about for developing birth to age 5 literacy plans. NCDPI

It has piqued the interest of partners that otherwise have not been as fully engaged with early childhood initiatives. Alexander County Partnership for Children

The most new or deepened connection has been with our school system and businesses so that we are on the same page and talking the same language. Ashe County Partnership for Children
Next Steps
Goal 7: Social-Emotional Health and Resilience

**COMMITMENT:** Babies, toddlers, and young children across North Carolina will express, recognize, and manage their emotions in a healthy way, especially under stress.

**2025 TARGET:** By 2025, North Carolina will have a reliable, statewide measure of young children’s social-emotional health and resilience at the population level.

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Goal 9: On Track for School Success

**COMMITMENT:** Young children across North Carolina will reach their developmental goals by the time they enter Kindergarten.

**2025 TARGET:** By 2025, increase the percentage of children across North Carolina who enter kindergarten at a level typical for their age group, according to the five domains of the NCDPI Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA).
Operationalizing the Pathways Action Framework

- Improving early childhood data
- Fostering collaboration across state-level initiatives and embedding Pathways
- Supporting early childhood systems in learning from families and communities
- Keeping a sustained focus on racial equity in early childhood systems building
- Communicating strategically to keep Pathways relevant and valuable
- Tracking and sharing progress on how policies advance the Action Framework
- Supporting policy work on some actions in the Action Framework
- Convening Pathways Partners annually
Operationalizing the Pathways Action Framework

Action Mapping

Pathways Action Council
What Can **YOU** Do?

- Forsyth Promise – and your individual organizations – can endorse the Pathways Frameworks: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/97K8PQX](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/97K8PQX)
- Contribute to the Action Mapping
- Talk about how the work you do impacts third grade reading.
- Share this information with your colleagues to build public will.
- Talk to your policymakers.
- Visit NCECF’s website at [www.buildthefoundation.org](http://www.buildthefoundation.org) to:
  - Access resources
  - Subscribe to our newsletter to stay up to date on action for young children and their families
Mandy Ableidinger
Policy and Practice Leader
mableidinger@buildthefoundation.org

919-987-1370
www.buildthefoundation.org
**Promote Understanding**

Promote public understanding of and support for policies that promote children’s birth-to-eight years for academic and lifelong success.

**Spearhead Collaboration**

Convene and spearhead collaboration to bridge North Carolina’s birth-to-five and kindergarten-to-third grade systems.

**Advance Policies**

Advance policies that create a stronger NC today and tomorrow by supporting each child’s birth-to-eight development.

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