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**MECK Pre-K Will Reopen With In-Person Instruction for 2020-2021 School Year
Income Restrictions Lifted to Help Families Impacted by COVID-19**

CHARLOTTE, N.C.— MECK Pre-K will reopen with in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. In order to ensure that children, families, teachers and providers feel safe and prepared for back to school, the following operational adjustments will be made:

- MECK Pre-K will reduce classroom sizes to allow for social distancing.
- MECK Pre-K leadership will have regular operational/health/policy check-ins with State and Local Departments of Health and Human Services, Mecklenburg County, Smart Start Leadership and Child Care Resources staff.
- Delayed start: Teachers will return on August 17, with students returning on a staggered entry schedule starting September 1.
- Mecklenburg County Public Health Leadership will host Q&A sessions for MECK Pre-K Providers and Teachers.
- MECK Pre-K will work with providers to ensure that they adhere to required [NC Department of Health and Human Services \(NCDHHS\) health and safety protocols](#). These include but are not limited to: daily health and safety checks upon arrival, limiting who is allowed in centers and classrooms, enhanced cleaning protocols, illness monitoring, reporting and isolation procedures.

This decision came after extensive discussions with officials from Mecklenburg County, the NC Division of Public Health and the NCDHHS. In addition, MECK Pre-K distributed surveys to families, teachers, and providers to gather feedback on the coming school year. Across all groups, the majority of respondents expressed a desire for children to return to the classroom even in light of the ongoing public health situation. Operating in a traditional, onsite instructional style benefits young children, families and employers by providing safe, supervised, affordable high-quality care allowing parents to work.

MECK Pre-K and Mecklenburg County leadership reviewed the data and determined that virtual pre-k instruction is not nearly as effective or impactful for young children. MECK Pre-K providers, many of whom have remained open providing care throughout the COVID-19 situation, will be prepared to deliver high-quality pre-kindergarten programming for our youngest learners.

Barring any changes in the public health situation, the program will not provide virtual or hybrid learning options so teachers can focus on delivering the best instruction and support in-person to the children who need it most.

MECK Pre-K is a voluntary public pre-kindergarten program that allows parent choice based on individual family needs and preferences. Eligible families who have applied for MECK Pre-K will have the opportunity to participate in a survey later this week to indicate their preferences and provide additional feedback to MECK Pre-K. MECK Pre-K works with a network of childcare providers, who will

have the option to participate or not this school year if they and/or their staff do not feel comfortable with in-person instruction.

To help families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Mecklenburg County has also lifted the income restrictions for MECK Pre-K's 2020-2021 school year. To be eligible for MECK Pre-K, children need only to live in Mecklenburg County and be four on or before August 31. Income documentation will still be required, but families earning more than 400% of the federal poverty level for their household size will still qualify. For complete details on the enrollment process, families can visit [MeckPreK.org](https://www.meckprek.org).

"We know that there is a lot of uncertainty in our community due to COVID-19," says MECK Pre-K Executive Director Trinisha Dean. "The County Manager and I want to reassure families that MECK Pre-K is here for them no matter what, delivering on our mission to prepare young children for kindergarten."

MECK Pre-K is hosting events for families who have questions about the enrollment process or fall reopening plans. There will be two webinars on Thursday, August 13; one at 6:30 p.m. in English, and one at 7:30 p.m. in Spanish. There will also be a "Drive-Thru" registration event on Saturday, August 15, from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., in the parking lot of the Child and Family Services Building, 601 E. 5th Street, Charlotte, NC 28202. Details on these events can be found at [MeckPreK.org](https://www.meckprek.org).

Space in MECK Pre-K is limited. For more information, families can call 704-943-9585, email info@meckprek.org or visit [MeckPreK.org](https://www.meckprek.org).

Additional Information: [NCDHHS Childcare Strong NC Toolkit](#)

About MECK Pre-K:

MECK Pre-K is a Mecklenburg County-funded voluntary program that offers free, quality pre-kindergarten to eligible four-year-old children. It is managed through Smart Start of Mecklenburg County and funded by Mecklenburg County. All MECK Pre-K classes are located in four-and five-star childcare centers and are taught by a licensed teacher and teacher assistant. Learn more at [MeckPreK.org](https://www.meckprek.org).

MECK Pre-K was created in 2018 to improve access to quality early childhood care and education for children in Mecklenburg County. This was aligned with the recommendations of the [Leading on Opportunity Report](#).

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