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**It's Pre-K Registration Time! The Pre-K Priority Encourages Families to Learn
about their Local Pre-K Options**

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (February 22, 2023) – February 1 marked the opening of Forsyth County's Pre-K registration window, and families with children who will be four years old by August 31, 2023 are encouraged to learn more about their local Pre-K options. This includes free, public Pre-K programs offered by Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS), Smart Start and Head Start as well as Pre-K options at licensed, private/independent child care businesses.

The Pre-K Priority, a collaboration of community organizations committed to early childhood education in Forsyth County, understands that with so many options, it can be challenging for families to determine the Pre-K classroom option that's best for them. To help families navigate their choices, The Pre-K Priority created a special webpage, prekpriority.org/register, with a tool that walks users through a series of questions to direct them to the Pre-K registration resource(s) that may work best for them. This includes a link to the [Child Care Resource Center](#) and its comprehensive database of more than 1,200 child care programs in Forsyth County and 8 other surrounding counties.

Katura Jackson, executive director of the Child Care Resource Center, a partner organization of The Pre-K Priority, has already seen an uptick in families asking about Pre-K. "The good news is that Pre-K enrollment numbers for this current school year have returned to pre-pandemic levels," said Jackson. "As more families come back to our local Pre-K classrooms, the options will be more limited for those who wait until later in the year to register their children."

Community awareness is key, so earlier this month The Pre-K Priority mailed more than 10,000 postcards to local families with preschool-age children about the Pre-K registration window and available resources.

"With so many different Pre-K pathways, most of which have limited slots, it's important that families begin doing their research now on which options may work best for them," said Traci Ross, CEO of Family Services of Forsyth County, operator of the county's local Head Start centers and a convening partner of The Pre-K Priority. "For programs like Head Start and NC Pre-K, registering early may give families more choice regarding classroom location as well as the opportunity to have their child screened for a qualifying need."

To make the process easier for Forsyth County families, there's one common application for all local Pre-K classrooms at Head Start, Smart Start and WS/FCS. This application is now available for the 2023-2024 school year online at <https://smartstart.schoolmint.com/login>. In addition, paper applications are available at various Winston-Salem locations including the WS/FCS Office of Early Learning at 2020 E. 12th Street, Smart Start of Forsyth County at 7820 North Point Boulevard, all Pre-K elementary school sites and Head Start. Smart Start, Head Start and WS/FCS all offer Pre-K teams who work alongside families to complete the application.

"Our goal is to eliminate barriers that keep families from accessing Pre-K opportunities for their children," said Ross. "Children learn more and faster at age four than almost at any other time in life. By taking advantage of the unique benefits of a quality Pre-K education, they are better prepared – socially, physically and mentally – for kindergarten and beyond."

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